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D. Venkat Rao

Cultures of Memory in South Asia

Orality, Literacy and the Problem of Inheritance

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For

Shobha
And our daughters
Nikhita
Anvita

*Runa-**anubandha** rupena...*

Preface

The contents of this book were in preparation for quite some time. They all emerged as discrete segments in response to the context of teaching humanities in "contemporary" India. The predicate in the previous formulation confronts us with many questions—questions concerning signatures, addressees, their teaching/reading frames, the ends of the domain, and above all, the specificity of the context of responding to the humanities. *Who* are we and *what* are we (if there is a "*we*") doing with/in the humanities in/from India? This work emerges out of the unease experienced in the everyday practice of reflecting on the instituted domain of the humanities.

The field of humanities is the legacy of Europe in cultures that faced colonialism. This legacy pervades the institutional and intellectual formations of the humanities in India even to this day. Millions of students study humanities in thousands of higher education institutions in India today. But the student composition is markedly heterogeneous as the students come from divergent bio-cultural communities (called *jati*s). The future of the humanities, it seems to me, in India is contingent upon the exploration of the cultural forms (in image, music, text, and performative compositions) of these divergent and countless communities. These unstructured forms with millennial genealogies pose fundamental questions concerning the relation between cultural formations and communication technologies. In the context of such a historical legacy any attempt to reorient teaching and research in the humanities in India is required to confront two related questions: (i) How does the field of humanities configure cultural forms and formations in India? And (ii) How do these forms and formations relate to communication technologies—from oral to digital—in their millennial existence? Intellectual and institutional futures of the humanities, (not only) in India, depend on how one addresses these questions.

Given the simple fact that the planet we inhabit (unevenly) is composed of heterogeneous cultural formations with multiple originations, the invasive, discursive (humanities), and institutional (university) contexts of teaching impel one to confront practical issues such as what should be taught and how should teaching move from the receiving ends of the European legacy in cultures that faced colonialism. One starting point that would provide a strategic node to bring together questions that emerged from the teaching scenario sketched above was to speculate on cultural difference. How do cultures differ from each other? To put it

more heuristically: how do we explore the difference between a culture that describes, theorizes, and institutionalizes the ends and discourses of man and another culture that does not systematize any such endeavors over millennia? Such a heuristic move could be made by focusing on how these cultures ("European" and "Indian") articulated and transmitted their memories. I am aware that any such binary cannot be rigorously maintained, that they need to be overturned and displaced; but cultural difference cannot be explored without such improvisable heuristic moves. The fact that philosophical anthropologies persistently advance theoretical models of the "history of the West," European entelechy, "metaphysics of presence," "discourse of man" goes to prove that the modern European West has consciously invested in demarcating and distinguishing the cultural difference of the West (especially) from Asia. All explorations of cultural difference, however, need not be replications of European philosophical anthropologies. One must learn to configure these differences in different ways. This work concentrates on the destinies of mnemocultures to mark cultural differences between India and Europe.

Tracing cultural difference cannot be reduced to either "culturalism" or "essentialism." Orientalist indulgences in stereotyping cultures have foreclosed serious inquiry into cultural singularities and differences in postcolonial thought. That cultures differ from each other is an empirical as well as theoretical assumption. Unlike the former (empirical), the latter requires working out internally consistent, sharable, or demonstrable analyses of commonly accessible material resources or complex compositions. The empirical and theoretical are not causally related. A "theory" that is built only on empirical material remains an ad hoc one—for its sustenance is contingent upon the vagaries of empirical sources. It is erroneous to reduce a theoretical inquiry into cultural difference to essentialism; for, such an approach does not presuppose difference empirically as already pregiven in the object itself. Tracing different patterns of organization in the very material that others have enframed in a certain way, a theoretical approach takes the risk of offering an account of the patterns; these accounts are ways of putting to work heuristic/"theoretical" insights into actual practice.

A theoretical inquiry functions within the parameters it sets for itself and it would be inappropriate to dismiss it merely on the basis of ad hoc parameters—that is, parameters that are not aimed at offering an alternative reflective insight. It is a bit like asking a Telugu singer to sing in Latin. One must see what the singer achieves in Telugu. An inquiry into cultural difference, therefore, can legitimately explore cultural material (that is, literary and philosophical, verbal and visual compositions). To charge such an inquiry as culturalist (what would be the fate of Nietzsche, Heidegger, or Derrida's work—let alone the compositions of varied non-European cultures?) is to presuppose that cultural masterial derives from some other more tangible and transparent material basis—be it "historical" or "economic" or "political." Such a charge does not see the primary necessity of inquiring into the epistemic privilege accorded to these presumed bases. I have not advanced this work explicitly as a "theoretical" venture as such. The phrase that I found useful in exploring the material in this work is *reasoning imagination*.

It is with this impulse of reasoning imagination that cultural difference is configured in this work. Moreover, I do not maintain the division between the empirical and theoretical in this work; such a template does not inspire this work. In a certain way, these categories are complicitous. *Cultures of Memory* is more a "radical empirical" (Derrida's phrase) work aimed at epistemological alternatives for reflective practice.

There is no pre-existing theoretical model this work conforms to. I have come to learn that there isn't any such model to address the questions broached in this work. Considerable amount of time was spent on the themes, motifs, and specific works explored in this book. The sheer enduring force of these works and the reasoning imagination that composes them helped me search for reflective directions. This does not mean, however, that this work is impervious to contemporary theoretical accomplishments and critical polemical debates that pervade and shape the university today. This work is alert to some of these developments and in fact engages them explicitly and obliquely throughout. I have no interest in offering this work as a representation of some phantasmatic homogeneous ("Hindu") culturalist India.

It seems to me that one acid test for contemporary Indian intellectuals (and most of the generally educated persons) pertains to their position on caste/*jati*. Invariably the response is caught between the related poles of political correctness and "feudal benevolence" (Spivak's politically correct formulation). These responses reel under the enormous burden of unexamined guilt and stigmatize *jati* in their responses. They reduce the *jati* person (especially the so-called "scheduled caste") to an abject figure. Strangely, Gandhi and Ambedkar remain in complicity in this conception. *Cultures of Memory* affirms the possibility of a different conception of this much maligned "category" and advances the task of critical humanities as a preparation to learn from the *guardians of memory* of these *jati* cultural formations. In undertaking such risks I have tried to be as scrupulous as possible in qualifying the specificity of the issues and works I am dealing with.

Well-meaning friends are quick to ask: Where is Islam and Christianity in your work? I see more a symptom than the patience required to explore cultural difference in such questions. First, no one, to my knowledge, has demonstrated how/whether Sanskrit reflective traditions have been significantly transformed (except *perhaps* in the fields of astrology and music) in the second millennium with the intrusion of Islam and Christianity. No such work exists in the context of Telugu literary traditions. This, in my view, points to the reflective integrity of Sanskrit traditions of reasoning imagination. I have tried to elaborate this point in the chapter on (the millennial absence of) translation, in the Sanskrit traditions, in this work. Here, I do point out the ambiguous epistemic status of Islam (and Christianity) in the work. Second, apart from some intimate engagement with the work of Indology, which is surely a Judeo-Christian assessment of Sanskrit reflective traditions, throughout the work, I point out explicitly and implicitly that my own work is deeply set within the modern institutional context of the university. The university is surely a colonial Christian (Cartesian) legacy. Grappling with the European legacy of the humanities in India, I cannot denegate the double bind

I work in. It is from within this aporetic predicament that I see the possibility of approaching critical humanities.

All said, surely no authorial intention has complete control over the work such an "intention" (if that can be definitively captured) produces. A serious intellectual tome can be used as a paper weight or a door-stopper. Surely there is something inherent in the work that "lends" itself to such uses (its weight and bulk). One only hopes, without guarantees of course, for other and more productive reflective uses of one's work. One cannot know with certainty, let alone command, the destinies and destinations of what one brings forth ("consciously").

This exploration into cultures of memory demands access to pertinent languages of different cultural formations. Without basic training in classical European languages, my access to classical and modern European culture has remained solely through the English language. Although I have had some basic exposure to the Sanskrit language, I depend mainly (and only) on bilingual (Sanskrit-Telugu) texts in this work. Whereas I have direct access to Telugu works. I have pointed out these limitations mainly to underline the limits (in my context, at least) within which inquiries into the humanities from the receiving ends can be undertaken. Even this compromised scene of inquiry aims at affirming the persistence of life of thought and thought of life outside the English language. At a certain level, thought and life, however, are impelled to move in the double bind of the "teaching machine" (to use Spivak's formulation) in the postcolonial humanities.

I must confess that although I critically engage with the work of Indology, I am neither a Sanskritist nor an Indologist by training. I have not taken recourse to critical editions nor deployed the diacritical apparatus in the presentation of my material and arguments in this work. I have transliterated all Indian origin words in the "common" English spelling. Even while citing the Indian origin words, I have tried to remain close to the Telugu rendering of them. This is because I have used mainly Sanskrit-Telugu bilingual compositions and commentaries in this work. All translations of Sanskrit citations in this work are drawn from this Sanskrit-Telugu interface; and all the translations into English, otherwise specified, are mine.

Although the chapters of this book can be read separately, they are all woven as nodes in a network. *Cultures of Memory* is offered as a modest portion of an immeasurable network woven by infinite clusters of nodes and knots. Retracing, reweaving, and suturing these nodes and clusters are the interminable tasks of cultures that faced colonialism. Unforeseen constellations of networks can be envisaged through such tasks. Critical humanities risk such tasks across heterogeneous cultural formations. While exploring the mnemocultural formations of India *Cultures of Memory* suggests the possibilities of transcultural critical humanities research and teaching initiatives from the Indian context in today's academy.

Acknowledgments

This work of critical humanities for me could emerge only from the teaching arena. In this arena I am primarily indebted to students with whom I explored the contents of this work. Students of several batches who responded to this work have now begun to move on and take these thoughts elsewhere in their own ways.

The one singular person who persisted in persuading me to put together this work is Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. On several occasions she listened and read with patience and offered productive response to whatever I communicated to her. I am most grateful to Raji for all the generous support she extended to me over the years.

Similarly, from the very inception of the ideas that went into this work, Bernard Sharratt provided them a warm and critical dialogic support. I hope I have earned the right to offer these thoughts as a modest but an "odd sort of addition" to what I learnt from him. My gratitude to Bernard remains undivided.

I was lucky enough to find occasional audiences where I could present my work. I am grateful to Alok Bhalla for inviting me to Sahitya Akademi conferences where I could discuss some of the chapters of this book. Prashant Parikh invited me to present my work at the Mohile Parikh Centre for the Visual Arts on several occasions. These invitations enabled me to develop the work on the visual culture. I thank Prashant for the continued dialogue and the support. P.C. Kar and Vinay Lal have warmly provided me space to try out some of the themes of this work and I am grateful to them. An earlier version of the Chapter 8 was presented in a conference at Chicago University. I thank Kaushik Sunder Rajan for the invitation and the lively discussion. An earlier version of the Chapter 6 was presented in a conference at MIT. I thank Arindam Datta for inviting me to the conference. A later version of this paper titled "*Tanūnapāt:* Kalos, Philos, and the Vestiges of Trace" was published in *The European Legacy* (vol. 18[3], 2013, pp. 287–307), © International Society for the Study of European Ideas. This paper is reprinted (with some changes) in this work by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, (http://www.tandfonline.com) on behalf of International Society for the Study of European Ideas. I wish to thank Karin Beesley for the permission. Some sections of Chapter 3 are drawn from my introduction to my translation of the Telugu autobiography titled *The Last Brahmin: Life and Times of a Modern Day Sanskrit Pandit* by Rani Siva Sankrara Sarma (Permanent Black, 2007). I am grateful to Rukun Advani for permitting me to incorporate this material in the present work.

A substantial part (on Derrida) of Chapter 2 was a part of a paper, "Derrida Elsewhere: A Mnemocultural Dispersal". This paper was included as a chapter in the book *Theory after Derrida: Essays in Critical Praxis*, edited by Kailash Baral and R. Radhakrishnan (Routledge, 2009). I am grateful to the editors for permitting me to include this account in Chapter 2 of this work.

It was my good fortune to find accomplished scholars who provided me their time generously to listen to and read parts of this work. I deeply appreciate the intellectual support extended by Velcheru Narayana Rao (for the extended discussions in Atlanta and Hyderabad), Ashis Nandy (for his endearing reception of mnemocultures), T.R.S. Sharma, Vivek Dhareshwar, K.C. Baral (for time in sylvan Shillong), Dilip Das, J.P. Dimri and Raghurama Raju.

It was a chance meeting with Purushottama Bilimoria at Shimla that made this work see the light of day. His prompt and encouraging response enabled me to try this work with Springer. I am grateful to Bilimoria for the invitation. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their patient reading and critical sympathy for this work. Last but not least, I must thank Shinjini Chatterjee for her prompt and attentive processing of the work, the gentle care with which she received and turned it into the book form. My thanks are also due to Nupoor Singh and others at Springer.

Above all, I have begun to see that the research programme and the intense work of S.N. Balagangadhara provides the possibilities of moving beyond the postcolonial abyss that I discuss in this work. I wish to gratefully acknowledge Balu for the singularity of his work.

I must also place on record my appreciation for The English and Foreign Languages University for providing me a sabbatical year for putting together this work on critical humanities.

Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction: Through the Postcolonial Abyss

Abstract This work engages with the question of cultural difference: How do cultures differ from each other? This work moves on the hypothesis that the reflective modes of Indian cultural formations preferred embodied and enacted memory over archival accumulations. This chapter outlines the hypothesis by focusing on specific works from Sanskrit and Telugu languages and undertakes a critique of the European discursive and institutional frames deployed to study Indian traditions of thought. In order to overcome the postcolonial impasse this chapter proposes attention to critical humanities.

Keywords Cultural difference · Colonialism · India and Europe · University · Critical humanities

> How to justify the choice of *negative form* (*aporia*) to designate a duty that, through the impossible or the impracticable, nonetheless announces itself in an affirmative fashion? Because one must avoid good conscience at all costs. Not only good conscience as the grimace of an indulgent vulgarity, but quite simply the assured form of self-consciousness: good conscience as subjective certainty is incompatible with the absolute risk that every promise, every engagement, and every responsible decision—if there are such—must run.
>
> Derrida (1993, p. 19, italics in original).

1.1 Ruptured Thought

In a critical sketch of modern intellectual scenario a few years ago philosopher J. N. Mohanty (2001a, p. 57) sharply observed that "modern Indian's perception of his own culture is determined by the West's perception of India…." The absurdity

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of the Indian situation for Mohanty is captured by the two classes of people who think about India: One group described above, reads, writes and thinks about India in English; and the second group conducts all these activities in Sanskrit. The latter, for Mohanty, who has preserved the textual and intellectual heritage across centuries, has little to say in the modern university; whereas, the former, Mohanty contends, knows little about the heritage, dominates the academy and wields all political power (Mohanty 2001a, pp. 59–60). If the scholars of tradition represent the "best", but lack tact, and not conviction, the academically dominant are full of passionate intensity. In this schema, needless to say, we (the writers and readers of this kind of work) are the passionate lot, intensely debating our obsessions, if not our certitudes, concerning our nation and its culture.

One might discount the philosopher's schema as classicist; one might contend that most European academics today, like their Indian counterparts, lack the intimate relation with European heritage (believed to be preserved in a Greek-Hebrew-Latin combine). But polemical contentions might themselves be dismissed as inadequate responses to classicist challenges. One's response must acknowledge one's responsibility to both the heritage (whatever that might be) and other challenges.

Implicit in Mohanty's account, however, there are two other themes, which complicate the scene much further. These are the themes of the discipline (and discourse) and the institution. Both these point out the contexts from which modern intellectual predicament emerges. If the discipline covers methodological and substantive issues concerning knowledge production, the institution shelters, organizes and enhances intellectual division of labour for consolidating legitimate and unified knowledge. "To be sure", wrote Samuel Weber (2000), "the intellectual division of labor has for at least two centuries haunted this ideal of comprehensive, total knowledge, by increasingly distancing the different divisions and disciplines from one another".

The modern university—a European creation—was conceived to organize shelter and disseminate divided fields of knowledge production. The knowledge thus produced and organized was essentially about the world, the self ("Man"), their relationship and their representations. As the divided domains became more and more productive, as they brought forth positive knowledges about the world and the self, the university could only house the domain experts. As the fields developed internally validated objects and protocols of inquiry, only the domain-validated individuals who functioned in accordance with the calculus of the field could touch the field. In other words the university secured for itself and for its progeny the position of a mediating agency for/of relations between the world and the self and their territorial representations. The university became the expert domain for production of specialized knowledges (Weber 1987, pp. 18–32).

The university, thus, as an arena for disaggregated knowledges is nonetheless a philosophical and political ideal. It is a philosophical concept as it was conceived to develop comprehensive and total knowledge about the world and the self—a knowledge that is "autonomous" in its existence and effect. Man as the subject and object of knowledge, man as the inquiring agent and the object inquired into,

underlines the political impetus of the modern university. Man as the sovereign agent of knowledge can penetrate every domain and horizon—of the world and self—and secure mastery over the target of inquiry. In other words, the university is quintessentially—irrespective of its divided domains of inquiry ("higher" and "lower"—science and non-science)—a humanistic enterprise. It moves on the axiomatic of the presumptuous mastery (of man) over the self and the world.

The "ends of man" that the university projected for itself are, sovereignty and mastery of knowledge; and these are, it must be emphasized, the reactive effects in an intellectual-cultural-historical milieu peculiar to Europe. The humanistic enterprise of the university was conceived of and advanced as an autonomous, sovereign activity floating "outside" the substantive and totalizing fold of the complicitous theological and political forces. The university was projected as a secular alternative to the political-theological muddle of European cultural history. But reactive formations cannot easily find their coveted Archimedean spaces to distance themselves from and objectify their sedimented cultural provenance. Reactive secular formations continue to be haunted by the displaced, distanced, repressed religio-theological presence of European past (the "re-turn to religion", "Eastern Europe", "Soviet Union", "terror", etc.). Presumed ruptures and breaks turn out to be confused repetitions. The modern university consolidated itself as a Protestant-Cartesian institution.[1]

The university in India is a colonial implant. It is a European implant with all its political philosophical and cultural baggage. It is a graft imposed with utter disregard for the tissue texture of the host culture. For the graft itself was conceived as a part of a whole good bestowed upon a "nation" to be civilized. The crisis of the university is symptomatic of the larger institutional crisis resulting from the modular "goodness" insensitively deployed. Whether and how the modular form of "good society"—a reactive formation to the core in a crisis-ridden Europe—will fare in the world will largely depend on the model's responsiveness and responsibility for the rhythms of the host culture. Since the colonial good was assumed to be an *a priori* good, the host's potential or possible response to the invasive good remains foreclosed.

The intellectual poverty of postcolonial situation is the effect of a protracted failure to reasonably imagine the potential or possible response of the silenced host. On the contrary, even to this day we continue to be fed by the stories of "death", "desuetude" or "sudden death" of the host culture's creative critical potential "on the eve of colonialism". The glory of European-colonial universalizable good continues to be projected as a heliocentric terminus for the global self-fashioning. We are yet to conceive of the possibility of a response, while caught in the grafted network, beyond the disciplinary, methodological and

[1] "[T]he 'traditionally modern' university—the university, as it developed in Europe since 1800—demonstrated its profound affinity with the Cartesian *Cogito*, and through it, … an essential dimension of modern *humanitas*…. As the Cartesian institution par excellence, the modern university conceives of itself as a place where universally—'globally'—valid knowledge is discovered, conserved and transmitted." Cf., Weber (2010, pp. 2–4).

valorized forms of representation institutionalized by the university. An almost impossible task—yet an unavoidable necessity to cross the colonial-postcolonial abyss.

The twin mechanisms of the discipline and institution, demarcate, delegitimize and displace whatever is not processed by them. Precisely this very operation has been described by Gayatri Spivak as epistemic violence (1990, p. 126; cf., 1999, p. 7). Epistemic violence irrupts any existing modes of going about or being in order to alter them permanently or decisively. In the process the prevailing modes are either recoded in accord with the disruptive epistemic protocols or they are denigrated and discarded. The European implant of the university functions on the premise of disregarding and denying any promise or potential to the regenerative pulse or tissue of the host culture.

There is no future—let alone any future anterior—or re-envisioning a future that will have been from the unexamined past—for the host culture except and only in accordance with the disciplinary protocols of the social sciences—in conformity with the object-making demands of history and anthropology. The markings of this violence cannot be erased by some individual good soul's volunteerism. Heritage (or heritages) cannot easily escape the expanding and annexing mechanisms of discipline and institution. Here we must point out that the most exemplary work on a certain aspect of Indian heritage was accomplished from these very filters—accomplished by none other than J.N. Mohanty and the other towering figure of philosophy, Bimal Krishna Matilal (accomplished, incidentally, precisely during the period of decolonization). Both the personalities were aware of this aporia of the enabling predicament, or equivocal luck; that is, they recode a certain stream of Sanskrit tradition (Navya-Nyaya—"new logic") in accord with the dominant "theory of rationality".

Mohanty retrospectively describes all such professionalist and disciplinarizing pursuits as an "intellectualist agenda": "There was a time when I pursued only what I have called the *Intellectualist Agenda*" whose aim was to identify and solve problems, "examining arguments for and against, and [affirming] logic as the theory of argumentation" (Mohanty 2001b, p. 87, italics in original). A substantial part of the philosopher's time was devoted to the "technically attractive" work of translating the content of the Navya-Nyaya into the language of modern logic. Mohanty's rather wry observation that such work was "less interesting;" and the disarming comment of strength that in such professionalist representation of heritage "apart from the cultural-political conclusion—'so we had it all', no new philosophical possibility shows up" (Mohanty 2001b, p. 88)—indicates the depths of epistemic violence. Mohanty's insights are profoundly instructive to all those concerned with decisions and actions in the aporetic nights of equivocating luck.

The discipline and institution are formidable calculative mechanisms that reinforce each other in their demarcations of legitimate and non-legitimate reflections of the world. Professional expertise is constituted and contained by these twin mechanisms. Despite its claims and its dominance as *the* paradigm of knowledge production, the culture of the expert has, as it expanded its claims on the "outside," always consolidated its own "inside"; or, configured the outside by

tacitly projecting itself as the universal cultural referent: this is the staying power of the institution (Weber 2000, p. 3).

If the Sanskritic cultural tradition, according to Mohanty, has become a casualty to this paradoxical institutional force of experts and disciplines, it must be affirmed with equal concern that cultures of memory or mnemocultures from the Indian societal formations have become the more devastated and displaced phenomena of epistemic violence in the colonial and postcolonial periods. These cultures are impelled to serve as objects of disciplinary calculations of ethnography or folklore. The point here is, however, not at all whether we should deny and withdraw from the institutional and disciplinary activities. No simple and voluntarist attempt to erase historical markings is possible. The question worth risking seems to be: How do the non-disciplinary and the non-institutional affect these twin mechanisms? How do these twin mechanisms conceive their relation to their other, that which is not part of them? Mohanty's implicit response to these questions is revealing. In this encounter between the expanding and annexing mechanisms of knowledge and their others, "no new philosophical possibility shows up".

1.2 Postcolonial Abyss

In his lifelong wrestle with his heritage Heidegger declared at one place that wherever thinking takes place—it does so "within the bounds sketched out by tradition" (Heidegger quoted in Mehta 1970, p. 307). If we pause for a moment and ask whether we, the heirs of discarded, denigrated and made-over traditions, have the confidence or privilege to affirm such a pronouncement today.[2] Whose tradition does our discursive, disciplinary and institutional functioning reinforce? Do we find an epistemic space for "ourselves" from our receiving ends of these implanted structures of thought and work? Who, for instance, is the human exemplified in the paradigm of the humanities within the confines of which we find ourselves conversing here? But above all who are the "**we**" (if there were to be a unified **we** at all) who are treading along somnambulistically as it were in these structures over decades (if not centuries)? Can the Indological edifice answer these questions for us? Not at all, says S.N. Balagangadhara. For the edifice erects

[2] Dharampal recounts a "dialogue" between Shankaracharya of Shringeri and a governor of Andhra. The Acharya was explicating several different facets of *varna vyavastha* ["caste system"] to the governor. After a while the governor promptly advised the Acharya that he should avoid talking about *varna*. "And the Shringeri Acharya fell silent." Dharampal goes on: "In a society rooted in its traditions and aware of its civilisational moorings, this dialogue between a head of the State and a religious leader would be hard to imagine. Saints are not asked to keep quiet by governors, except in societies that have completely lost their anchorage." Cf., Dharampal (2000, pp. 164–165).

Western experience of India conceived from the Christian theological background ("Christianity incognito"—an observation not too far from Heidegger's own[3]).

We are yet to take the risk of configuring the "background" of our experience, insists Balagangadhara (1994, pp. 510–516). We are yet to ask whether we should a priori subject this "experience" to the conceptual grid that our historical predicament has exposed us to. But can't we derive ourselves from our rational or argumentative traditions as some of our modern philosophers ventured in a comparatological vein? No, says J.N. Mohanty. In all such ventures, as we pointed out above, we were indulging in intellectual gymnastics for decades, he reveals.

Caught in the disciplinary insularities, we seem to ventriloquate someone else's questions; or, we seem to feel obligated to answer questions set by someone else. When the task of our thinking does not forge its own questions and is oblivious of what inquiries it should pursue—such a situation is symptomatic of our intellectual destitution. Our postcolonial destitution is yet to open up passageways for us to engage with our pasts. Our destitute situation forecloses any affirmation of a tradition (or traditions) of thought within which our thinking can be said to emerge, or will have emerged. We are already thinking of mourning our past and seeking a proper burial of the dead.[4]

The humanities that ought to unravel reflective destitution of our times and plunge into the colonial abyss to forge new responses to the crisis of the university, succumbs to topical, expedient inquiries whose models are set elsewhere. Given the humanistic essence of the university, at least the humanities could have, one would have thought, inquired into the philosophical and political implications of the university in its implanted contexts. Who is the implied human in the humanities? If human creativity and innovation, human reflection and performance, human utterance and artefact are the concerns of the humanities, does the (post)colonial university concern itself with and enable anyone in its location to reflect on the potentialities of these singular human creations? Is there a place for humanistic axiomatic—the patented legacy of the European implant—in these discredited reflective, creative practices of the host culture? If the humanities are not oriented towards inquiry into reflective modes and media, their material manifestations and their idiomatic reach and depth, what are the ends of the humanities in their implanted contexts? The humanities are yet to address such questions at an institutional level in our contexts.

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3 Heidegger quoted by J.L. Mehta (1985, p. 226). From the long quotation the other relevant lines are: "the world image is Christianized…. Christendom gives a new interpretation to its Christian character by transforming it into a world-view, thus adapting itself to modernity".

4 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2000, pp. 15–16) argues that "deconstructive Cultural Studies would also be a claiming of ancestors." For the postcolonial the colonially imposed "new civilization" on the colonized did not offer "proper burial rites for the earlier" colonized civilization, she contends. Yet, curiously, this claiming of the ancestors is advanced here as the "movement of the colonized towards the colonizer", an assertion which barely suggests a possible passageway towards the displaced pasts of the cultures that faced colonialism.

Today, no discipline and no institution is in a position even to think of plunging into the abyss over which our precarious times float, and grope for reflective fibers from the discarded, discredited and denigrated, without a chance, dregs of the host cultures that live on with the colonial transplants. This groping in the abyss, it must be noted, is without guarantees. Unlike the European transplants—whose promise of good health was advanced and universalized with unquestioned guarantees—the postcolonial groping, if it were to take place, would be a step without guarantees; it can only be a step without a path, a movement without destination, an interminable, restless searching without ends.

It is from the abyss of postcolonial destitution that this work emerges and reiterates the need to gather resources for affirming "our" heterogeneous pasts for the promise of a future (without guarantees). Even this affirmative effort, it must be submitted, can be undertaken (here) from within the delimited framework of the university. For the latter is the institutionalized medium and effect of philosophical-political, rhetorical-pragmatic work of thought determined by the West. In other words, the affirmative task can be undertaken in the double bind of heritages: one, inescapable but which spaces us under erasure; and the other, as yet unavailable (institutionally) but bonded to our destiny. As a metaphysical humanistic (and political) institution, the university interpellates us in this double bind. And it is from this bind that we must forge our affirmations from *outside-in* the university.

1.3 Re-Tracings

Instead of rushing headlong to erect an alternative to Western metaphysical heritage (against which J.L. Mehta warned us decades earlier [1970, pp. 236–239]), it seemed worthwhile, as we work from within the inheritances of this European forge called the university, to strategically specify a certain thematics based on Sanskrit and *bhasha* (language) *vangmaya*s (pervasive utterance) and *kala*s ("arts"). That is, the worlds of vocal-acoustic rhythms, gestural-graphical performatives of Indian traditions are explored in this work for gathering critical resources.

If heritages are articulations of memories, this work moves with the hypothesis that Indian heritages incline more towards speech and gestural communicational modes; whereas the European heritage prefers inscriptional (hypomnesic) mode. As the latter gets advanced as evolutionarily and explanatorily more powerful and efficient, the former become the objects of disciplinary and institutional investigation. In all such investigations Europe, by default, functions as the culture of referent (Derrida 1981, p. 282); as a result, the question of cultural difference, how cultures differ from one another, is essentially addressed on the basis of comprehension of Europe as *the* model of culture. Working from within the double bind of heritages (Indian and European), this work hopes to configure cultural difference on the basis of *alithically* (non-inscriptionally) woven cultural memories.

Cultures of memory or what is configured as mnemocultures in this work, emerge and disseminate memories through the media of speech and gestural, or song and performative compositions. The proliferation of these compositions, in the Indian context, is intimately filiated to the dispersal of internally differentiated biocultural formations called *jati*s ("castes"). As the latter cannot be decisively measured, the genres of composition cannot be definitively counted in these mnemocultures. The radical heterogeneity of Indian cultural forms and formations emerges from this enigmatic weave of inexhaustible *jati*s and genres. The generative impulse of these bio-cultural formations can be said to constitute the Indian cultural difference.

While working from within the disciplinary and institutional structures of the university, this work moves with an ensemble of nodes to figure out the *differentia specifica* of the two heritages we are caught in. The ensemble forged for our purposes consist of nodes such as (i) Memory and Archive (to differentiate musical-melodic reflections from documentarily authenticated inscriptive modes of thought); (ii) Non-narrative and Narrative (to contrast non-ipsocratic compositions from identity-asserting edifices); (iii) Ani-conic and Iconic (to demarcate non-referential figuration from lithic-objectual representations); (iv) Reasoning Imagination and Theoretical Rationality (to suggest difference between literary inquiries and demonstrative reasoning); (v) *Vivarta* (morph) and Translation (to set apart morphogenic modes of self-transformation from content transferrals); (vi) *Jati* and Community (to differentiate biocultural formations from unifying classes or groups); (vii) and Critical Humanities (to reiterate heterogeneous modes of being and putting to work inheritances to mark their difference from institutionalized human of the Humanities). The distinct arena where the ensemble operates in this work is the singular and irreducible material phenomenon called the body complex. These thematic nodes, it is hoped, might open passageways to configure the singularity of Indian reflective and creative traditions—and thus, perhaps, enable us to differentiate them from the hegemonic Euro-American orientation of thought.

While the rest of the work is a focused elaboration of each of the nodes in chapter-length compositions, the remaining part of this chapter outlines questions addressed in the work and sketches the contours of the (three) parts and (ten) chapters devoted to expand the nodes of the work.

This entire work will engage two critical tasks:

(1) To reconfigure European representations of India as colossal paradigmatic extension of a classical *reading*—a reading that seeks genetic relation between the text and the context. Despite the challenge and upheavals that this paradigm of reading suffered in recent times from within European tradition—the modernity of philologico-archaeological and referentialist reading models continue to dominate studies of South Asia (and other cultures). Given that the university as a humanistic institution has nurtured and institutionalized these models of reading, the urgency of configuring alternatives impinges on us in undertaking teaching and research in India.

(2) The second risky task explored in this work can be tentatively called a "mnemocultural response" to "textual" inheritances. Without the predominance of archaeological and referential indicators, cultures of memory in South Asia moved on with forms of symbolization that are verbal and visual, acoustic and gestural, which are embodied and enacted. These modes of articulating memory raise questions such as: how do cultural formations receive and respond to these inheritances of embodied memory? What is their epistemic status in the context of the university? Does this response implicitly or explicitly relate to any sense of responsibility among these traditions? How does one configure mnemocultural responsibility in our contexts of teaching and research in India?

1.4 Tracks of Memory

In attempting to configure cultural difference through mnemocultures, this work accords an epistemically critical space to memory and its articulation. Memories are intangible. Memories are the perennially endangered inheritances of the body. Two distinct modes of conserving memories can be identified among life forms. Although externalization of memory is common to all life forms, the human-animal invests in prosthetic conservation of memories. The non-prosthetic retention and protention of memories, however, is not confined to non-human (that is animal or bird) life forms alone. The humanist cultural differences (that divide and oppose the human and animal) can be marked by the role they accord to prosthetic technics.

From immemorial times singers, poets, dancers and musicians remained the guardians of memory. The efficacy of song, melody, sonance and performance for millennia embodied and enacted sonic thinking. The ascendant mnemotechnics of literacy territorialize(d) and denigrate(d) mnemocultures. Socrates/Plato was the first one to ridicule Ion the rhapsode—a figure from the discredited epoch. Logocentric thinking—a thinking that privileges rational speech—has marginalized and discarded non-linguistic melopoiac reflection and imagination. Musical thinking can still be traced among the mnemocultures of the world.

The orientation of this inquiry into musical reflectivity is comparative in its examination of mnemocultures. This inquiry grapples with culture-specific articulations of memory and inheritances, with its central focus on Indian cultural formations. Cultural differences are tracked on the basis of the epistemic space accorded to song, music and performance in cultures. Specific themes such as how memories affect conceptions of "texts", the relation between memory and *jati*, and the problem of possessing memories or owning inheritances will be addressed.

For the purpose of demonstration specific compositions from the narrative, visual and performative, or image, music and textual traditions of India will be drawn.

In contrast to the dominant communicational modes of writing and documentation (archive) that constitute Western epistemic forms, mnemocultures proliferate through the most primordial forms of speech and gesture. The first part of the work engages with the question why (even after writing was available), speech and gesture have remained the preferred modes of composition and dissemination in Sanskrit reflective traditions. Despite various efforts to show the intrusion of writing into "Sanskrit knowledge systems" neither the scribal mode gained significance, nor, more importantly, did it in any palpable way affect the mnemocultural reflective ethos (performative response to the received).

The cultivated continuity of speech and gesture here requires us to attend to the place/status of instruments, instrumentatlity (in short, techńe), in these traditions. Although these modes too can be instrumentalized for representation, the fact that they have been used non-representationally over millennia needs to be recognized. The fact that these modes and practices *can* be represented, and objectified raises the question: how can these representations avow their responsibility to the performative ethos? Ethnography and Indology rarely engaged with this question. Literary criticism (as shown by Paul Zumthor) and philosophy (as argued by Adriana Cavarero, Brian Rotman) abandoned these modes for a long time. Curiously, Derrida, who has radically undermined the traditional debate about speech and writing, avoids any sustained meditation on the question of techńe in the context of speech and gestural modes. He begins with the classical concept of "writing"—and it is with writing alone that philosophy is constitutively filiated.

The first part of the work is developed in two chapters. The first chapter discusses the specificity of mnemocultural formations. For this purpose it draws on the Greek and Judaic conceptions of memory. The argument here suggests the Socratic moment in European heritage as the critical turning point for the emergence and consolidation of mnemotechnical retentional systems.

As is well known, Jacques Derrida's intensive and extensive unravelling of European heritage has implications for what we have configured here as mnemocultures. For Derrida's double move of overturning and displacing the received binaries of the heritage concentrated centrally on the pair speech and writing. Undermining the heritage's unexamined privileging of speech and discrediting of writing, Derrida sees speech as the vector of Europe's metaphysical legacy; denying speech its privileged access to consciousness or mind, Derrida contends the role of "writing" (understood as a general notion of graphical mark, material inscription, syntactical chain) in the functioning of speech as well. Given the significance of this argument, this chapter engages with Derrida's work to suggest the limits of deconstruction in the context of mnemocultures. The sedimented debate between speech and writing will be re-examined here at a theoretical and empirical level.

As Plato's problematic of memory (discussed in terms of the relation between anamnesis and hypomnesis) and Derrida's unravelling of Platonic heritage are profoundly significant in demarcating and reconfiguring mnemocultures, their

work receives attention at several places in my arguments. In order to specify the differences between cultures of memory and institutions of archive this chapters also engages with the thought of Bernard Stiegler whose recent work on exteriorized retentional systems (digital archives) demands attention.

After discussing the crucial aspects of European conceptions and critiques of memory in the first chapter, the second chapter provides an account of memory in Sanskrit reflective traditions. The argument here aims at demarcating the differences between mnemocultures and the cultures that valorize mnemotechnologies. In a way this chapter specifies the reflective frame which is put to work in the remaining chapters of this book. Given the fact that Indology puts forth "new" inheritors of Sanskrit traditions (largely in the form of professional European scholars), this chapter engages with Indological accounts of Indian cultures of memory. The arguments in this part are developed in Chaps. 2 and 3 titled: (a) *Configurations of Memory and the Work of Difference,* and (b) *Futures of the Past: Mnemocultures and the Question of Inheritance*.

1.5 Mnemic Inquiries

After detailing the differentiated modes of articulating memory and specifying their theoretical-practical implications, the second part of the work opens up the wider dimensions of mnemocultural formations. This part consists of three chapters and each of the chapters elaborates some of the nodes outlined earlier. The nodes pertaining to non-narrative, aniconism, and reasoning imagination receive substantial attention through the resources of Sanskrit reflective traditions in this part.

In engaging with the problematic of discourse (discipline) and institution (university) and cultural difference ("India") this work addresses specific questions such as: given the diversity of complex cultural formations of India, can there be an intellectual history for/of India? Can one speak of an intellectual tradition of/for India? If intellectual history aims at understanding a culture on the basis of singular reflective resources that are internal to the culture, how can one identify such resources and how would one approach them for an understanding and recounting? Can one confine oneself to only reactive resources after the colonial rupture and yet claim to offer an Indian intellectual history? Can academic disciplinary accounts help us address the question of the (im)possibility of Indian intellectual history? These questions are unavoidable in our context because the discipline and the institution (the academy), as contended earlier, remain the vehicle and substance of the event and effect of colonial rupture. They impinge on the reflective currents of other cultures and inscribe their script on these currents in fabricating their disciplinary accounts.

The attempt, however, to trace mnemocultural currents caught in the embrace of violent interpretative models in this work is not aimed at forging yet another grand intellectual historical narrative, or advancing a certain civilizationalist

venture. On the contrary this work sets out to offer discrete accounts of specific text-compositional forms from Indian languages. As this work is concerned more with methodological issues and epistemic frames, it does not aim at retrieving informational knowledge. Even as the work engages with relatively unexamined sources—unexamined in the wake of colonial rupture (in Sanskrit and Telugu compositional traditions) the methodological impetus for this work is sought from the reflective modes of literature and philosophy. These rather conventional modes are preferred here, as they have made possible radical unravelling of Western intellectual heritage in the recent years. Yet these critical methodological currents themselves need to be rearticulated while engaging with the Indian resources of memory. For, the classically agonistic relation that literature and philosophy has had in the Western heritage does not find easy parallel in the Indian context.

As the classical discourses of literature and philosophy were wedded to literacy/writing, they had no concern for the more primordial but persistent communicational forms of gesture and speech, song and performance. Consequently, the epistemic or reflective force of these forms and their praxial intimations find no place in the institutionalized forms of philosophy and literature (song cultures remain discarded in researches here). The scribal-print-documentarist archive systematically endeavoured to reduce the voice and gesture of these forms. But if one is concerned with the discarded live currents after colonial rupture one needs to attend to the epistemological and praxial-ethical effects of these distinct communicational forms, and their musical thought and performative reflections.

Whereas the impulse of reasoning imagination, not pitched in opposition to the heritage of the principle of reason—actually moves on with a vigilant, passive temperance towards it—enacts its thinking contextually or context-sensitively. Unaware of or indifferent to any valorized normative order of a violent hierarchy of dominant reason and subordinated imagination, the impulse of reasoning imagination replicates itself innovatively in discrete heterogeneous forms and disperses itself variedly.

The genres of reasoning imagination, of reflection and creation, proliferated in the Indian context in radically heterogeneous ways. This difference calls for a fundamental comparatological analysis at epistemic levels involving Sanskrit-Graeco-Christian traditions. The first chapter in this part is devoted to outline the ways in which "literary inquiries" in the Sanskrit tradition have woven their compositions with reasoning imagination. For elaborating the argument in this part, the chapter engages with the reflective work on *kavya* (the literary, poetic formation) that spread over a millennium in Sanskrit reflective traditions.

A long-standing and much maligned reflective current in the Sanskrit traditions concerns the relation between "textual" or compositional and contextual or spatio-temporal coordinates. For over two centuries Indological accounts ransacked Sanskrit compositions to elicit explicit historical or political referents in them in order to definitively ground them in history. The systemic paucity or absence of such evidence among these compositions did not deter the inquirers and make them rethink their intellectual agenda. One such more recent grand venture to erect an intellectual history *of* India can be found in the work of Sheldon Pollock. This

chapter offers a brief critical account of Pollock's work as an exemplification of the classical interpretative model.

Following the substantial account of the modes of communication and their epistemic implications on the one hand, and exposing the invasive classical interpretive models on the other, this chapter moves the mnemocultural inquiry to dispel any vagueness concerning mnemocultures, and specifies certain features of the mnemotext. Although it is impossible to decisively identity the form of a mnemotext, one can point to certain patterned aspects of a mnemotext as composed of five crucial strands of (i) allusion, (ii) citation, (iii) numeration, (iv) melopoeia, and (v) reasoning imagination. Mnemotexts allude to each other, quote without reference, number their components situationally with precision and performatively bring forth the composition in metrical-melodic tones. A mnemotext, like the body complex, is both the effect and the condition of other intricately woven compositional strands—which enable it to proliferate limitlessly and variedly. In order to elucidate the compositional structure of the mnemotext this chapter examines in detail the work of Rajasekhara's *Kavyamimamsa,* a composition which gains strategic significance in this work. This chapter continues the epistemic comparative exploration introduced in the first part.

The singular mnemotextual compositions within a much larger reflective and creative milieu of Sanskrit reflective traditions suggest the ways in which the reasoning imagination accents and weaves reflective accounts. These accounts are nowhere consolidated either as an evolutionary intellectual history or as a grand narrative of Sanskrit reflections. In fact, this work contends, across millennia the Sanskrit reflective traditions eschew any attempts to valorize any narrative mode of representation. It can be argued that the Sanskrit traditions do not accord any privileged epistemic space to narrative; narrative does not enjoy the status of a *pramana* (modes or means of cognition)[5] in the epistemological traditions of Sanskrit cultural formations.

The second extended chapter in this part of the work focuses on the peculiar position of narrative in Indian traditions. If narrative has received epistemically and culturally privileged position as an identitarian (ipseity) and ethical mode of being in Europe, Sanskrit traditions suspend any such status to narrative. On the contrary, one notices the prominent spread of what can be called the non-narrative strand in the mnemocultural weave of Indian reflective formations. This chapter extends the mnemocultural compositional modes by engaging with the extraordinarily dispersed composition called the *Panchatantra*. After a detailed account of how the double strand of narrative and non-narrative fibers weave this (plotless) composition, the chapter offers a close reading of a singular node from the multiple network of this mnemotext; this reading intimates us with the deeper currents of mnemocultural modes of being in the world. The relation between compositional and existential modes of being (as a way of articulating time and

[5] On epistemological traditions of India, cf. Mohanty (1992, pp. 227–268; and 2000, Part I and II: pp. 11–94).

being) is extensively discussed in a later chapter on the *Mahabharata* in the third part of this work.

At one level this work, exploring the relation between reflective and generative forces in the articulations of the materiality of memory, body and idiom, can be seen as a primal inquiry—in the context of Indic cultural formations—regarding the relation between the body and symbolization. Cultures of memory in the Indic context, I contend, are more inclined towards embodied and enacted modes of verbal and visual symbolization. Hence their indifference at an epistemic level towards writing and the archive as symbols of abstraction and representation in the Indian cultural formations. However, this work is not conceived as a chronicle of Indian oral traditions. The very activity of symbolization is explored here in response to Derrida's fundamental displacement of the most sedimented metaphysical relation between speech and writing. Yet in consonance with the Western heritage which he was countersigning, Derrida continued to work, I contend, with the privileged emblems of this heritage—writing and the archive. Exploring his radical reflective initiatives, this work engages with the primordial communicational modes of speech and writing and examines how cultural singularities and differences get articulated.

The cultivated indifference towards writing and archive in mnemocultural traditions implies a significantly different concern towards the symbol in general. Mnemocultural symbolization, unlike in the Western episteme, takes the radical step of suspending or reducing symbolization (verbal or visual) in general. Whereas scriptural and archival passions haunt the West from the Greek archons to contemporary prosthetic archival fevers (digital and molecular). The last chapter of this part is devoted here to explore this enigmatic relation to the symbol in Indic mnemocultural practices. The specific thematic undertaken here is the conspicuous absence of images (and narratives) for nearly two millennia in Sanskrit reflective traditions.

This chapter further demonstrates that the verbal and visual idioms—the sources of *nama* (name) and *rupa* (form)—epistemically have a reducible status with regard to the body complex. Although this thematic is explored throughout the work, this chapter attends to visual symbolization in Indian cultural formations. Drawing on Sanskrit reflective traditions an attempt is made here to theoretically grapple with the relation between symbol, icon, desire and the body. This part offers an account of epistemic contrasts between European and Indian (mainly Sanskrit) reflective traditions and their implications for differential modes of being.

Although the verbal compositions are replete with visual imagery and enacted rituals with clear status as spectacles in space—neither does the Sanskrit tradition for centuries offer any material artefacts and non-verbal visual imagery, nor does one find any injunction against idol/image making in these traditions. A curiously similar tendency can be noticed among several communities of *jati*s and tribes of India. Neither an idol nor a temple captures a whole range of gods and goddesses of these communities (nor is there a single unifying narrative).

It is contended here that the absence of plastic visual compositions has not received any attention of art theory in the Indian context. Art history, the only dominant discipline with regard to Indian "art" traditions, remained more preoccupied with archaeological and stylistic (and of late "political") questions. Indeed there is no rigorous account concerning the absence of any concept of art in the Sanskrit reflective traditions in the early period. The easy translation of the Sanskrit term *kala* as "art"—it will be argued—is not only epistemically untenable but silently incurs translational and conceptual violence on Indic reflective practices.

For the purposes of analysis this chapter examines, among others, the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy and the relevant volumes of IGNCA's (Indira Gandhi National Centre for Art) "foundational" texts on art. This chapter advances the argument that for the performative ethos of Sanskrit reflective practices, the most irreducible material sign remains the body itself and that all surrogate or prosthetic symbols—verbal or visual forms, gestural or scribal practices—in the ultimate reckoning only have a reducible status. In the context of such radical reflection on symbol, the chapter is also obliged to examine the iconic turn that erupts in Indic cultural formations. In order to explore the "iconic turn", this chapter engages with one of the early compositions on sculpture and painting in the Sanskrit tradition—the *Chitrasutra*. In this regard the analysis here explores reflective alternatives to the dominant conceptions of idol/icon that govern the domain.

The issues raised in this part are developed in four chapters: Chap. 4: *Learning in the Double Bind: Mnemotextual Inquiries and Action Knowledges;* Chap. 5: *Fables of Identity and Contingencies of Certainty: Disarticulations of the* Panchatantra; Chap. 6: *Tanunapat*: *Kalos, Philos and the Vestiges of Trace*.

1.6 Dispersals and Receptions of Memory

If narrative can excavate and archive a sense of identity from the "chaos" of mere living, narrative also has been accorded an ethical status in European intellectual history. For, narrative saves and preserves memory against the threat of forgetting. Narrative is thus seen as an articulation of being and time. Whereas mnemocultures do not sublimate memory in narratives of selfhood. In their persistent activity of putting the body to work, mnemocultures suggest another mode of articulating temporality of being. The irreducible material phenomenal entity called the body is seen here as the instance or instantiation of existence; yet it is not an isolated discrete physical structure as such.

The body as the medium and effect of desire results from immemorial duration, which textures the beings as such in existence. Sanskrit reflective traditions configure the body as a complex of phenomenal elements (*indriyas*) and a radically non-phenomenal, intangible and incalculable weak force (*para*—the other).

This conception of the body complex implicitly turns existence into a responsive tending of the body with its other on the one hand and instance with duration on the other. In other words, mnemocultural responsibility requires cultivation of what one is endowed with in the instance of one's existence. There is no exemplary narrative that can normatively model a universally valid mode of being. Consequently, in mnemocultures modes of being proliferate heterogeneously; as modes and ways of going about in the world multiply and differentiate—their articulations of visual and verbal forms of symbolization spring forth and disperse. Memories live on and disseminate diversely.

Mnemotexts proliferate and no norm or law of genre can regulate or delimit them. No wonder Mammata (11th century) declares that verbal poetic forms are composed according to conventions but are bound or abide by no rules (*niyatikruta niyamarahitam*). No wonder, Indology, as a European discipline of thought, is yet to succeed in producing any substantial work on the generic diversity of Sanskrit reflective ethos and genres (or *genos*). Dedicated to neither normative unities nor referential certainties, mnemotexts multiply heterogeneous genres and move on. The term genre (with its etymological trace in Sanskrit *jana*—generativity, people) has several genetic connotations such as generation, form, genus, genera, genre, gender and *genos*. The singular text that (synechdochically or fractally) can be concentrated on (for strategic reasons) to explore these multiple connotations of mnemotextual generativity is the *Mahabharata*. The first chapter in the third part of this work (Chap. 7) engages with the polyphonic composition of the *Mahabharata*.

Confronted with the diversely proliferating mnemotextual compositions, Indology deployed philological and "hermeneutic" protocols of reading derived from European intellectual history. These protocols are fundamentally concerned with the written, documented and archived resources of Christianity. Procedures of "higher" or "lower" textual criticism, "original writing", "critical edition", hierarchy of texts and documents, authorial intentions, critic as priest, and thematic unities begin to, by default as it were, dominate and order the diversity of mnemotexts. While unravelling the paradox of Euro-American readings, this chapter advances the argument that the *Mahabharata* is one among the various compositions, which is deeply constituted by the epistemic concerns about the body complex and the perennial proliferation of genres and *genos*.

As a deeply self-reflexive and recursive composition the *Mahabharata* embodies and performs the mnemocultural work of reasoning imagination and praxial ethos. Defying any law of genre and confounding modes of thought, the *Mahabharata* transgressively proliferates inside and outside its confines. This mnemotext is composed of multiple narratives and multiple frames which frustrate any search for a unified central plot. Seductive narratives that entrap the listener/ reader and the actor are persistently interrupted by a non-narrative impulse that divides narratives as it makes the structure of the composition significantly incohesive; the compositional clusters and strands also configure differing modes of being in the world. Drawing on the thematics of the body, desire, temporality, and

the generative impulse, the argument here risks configuration of the implied addressee of the composition in the *Mahabharata* in particular and in the Sanskrit *vangmaya* in general. Here it is contended that the addressee is not a "reader" of the text but a *listener* of sonic intimations which provide the conditions of possibility of cultivating distinct modes of being.

This final part of the work has three chapters. The first chapter in this part, Chap. 7, is titled: *The Mahabharata Contretemps: Temporality, Finitude and the Modes of Being in the* Itihasa.

Sanskrit mnemocultural formations throw up curious challenges. They do not take to scribal art despite its ascendancy in history; they do not privilege the narrative mode (at least for nearly two millennia); similarly, despite the absence of any interdiction, they do not take to lithic plastic visualization of their reflections and creations. On the same lines, we notice that in spite of the extraordinary productivity and proliferation of Sanskrit compositions, for millennia, these traditions do not undertake the task of translation. Emerging from theo-centric intellectual history, translation is secularized in European tradition as a life enhancing and god-defying (but God imposed) activity. Whereas persistently "refining" itself from the vibrant heteroglot milieu, Sanskrit individuated its own reflective and creative modes; its generative impulse burst forth in internally self-differentiating compositions and biocultural formations. For nearly two millennia this generative dynamic found no use for inter-linguistic or inter-semiotic transferrals of its compositional content. The heterogeneity of Sanskrit mnemocultures remained untouched by any Babelian saga.

What is in these traditions that spreads across and transforms itself but eschews another language for vehiculating itself? What is the strength of mnemocultural apparent monolingualism? Or, what is peculiar to this mnemopraxial tradition which makes the "foreign", which was essential in modern conceptions of translation, redundant? The curious paradox of Sanskrit traditions is that while they do not translate, they lend themselves to translation. As in the case of narrative and iconic turns around the time of the Common Era, we notice that Sanskrit mnemocultural compositions lend themselves to translation extensively. The expansion and fecundation of Indian *bhasha*s from the end of the first millennium is contingent upon Sanskrit's drift into *bhasha vangmaya*s. The second chapter of this part of the work explores this paradoxical movement of Sanskrit mnemocultures. For the purpose of analysis the chapter draws on Sanskrit and Telugu literary traditions. As the epistemic comparative strand of the work is crucial, this chapter examines the Indian phenomenon in the context of European theorization of translation. Drawing on mnemocultural notes this chapter suggests the possibility of living on (generically and existentially) beyond the interdictions of the accursed zone of Abrahamic traditions. The arguments of this section are developed in Chap. 8 titled *Responsive Receptions: The Question of Translation Beyond the Accursed Zone.*

Colonialism is a concerted effort to alter decisively and permanently the epistemic configurations of the colonized. Whether this effect is entirely successful or

not (imperialism has no moral luck, Spivak contends)[6] it has certainly ruptured mnemocultural inheritances and ethos. This was accomplished through new modes of knowledge production and representation on the one hand, and through founding new institutions of training and validation, on the other. These new modes displace the embodied and performative practices of recitation and meditative enactment and enframe the practice and content of the practice as objects of knowledge. These objects are accorded evidentiary and demonstrable status for ascertaining abstractable truths from mnemocultural practices. This new colonial episteme of representation and objectification in turn founds the archive, museum, the library and the educational institution to circularly validate the ruptural epistemic effect. The "ethnographic state" (which anthropologizes *jati*s) and the archival empire (which documentarizes lively practices) transform the protocols of response.[7]

The last chapter of this part, Chap. 9, is titled *Listening to the Textlooms of Vemana: Memory, History and the Archives of Betrayal*. It examines the colonial epoch as initiating a conflict between archive (repository of objects of truths) and memory (intangible performative effect). As this asymmetric and violent relation between the archive and memory advances, the chapter contends, the performative competence and response is either discredited or discarded. Disciplinary fields like Indology and ethnography or folklore are unthinkable without such instutionalized violence on mnemocultures. In order to explore these themes, this chapter concentrates on the compositions of Vemana, the 17th century weaver of verses in Telugu. Once the early 19th century British civil servant, C.P. Brown, turned Vemana into a documentary event (as he did Telugu literature itself into one)—through scribes—the prominent critical trend on Vemana remained mainly (and confusedly) documentarist.

This chapter will examine two such "critical" commentaries on Vemana and offer an alternative possibility of receiving and responding to the poet. The chapter also unravels why Vemana becomes such a significant figure in the British civil servant's oeuvre and how his legacy continues to dominate contemporary appropriations of Vemana for rationalist and "dalit" causes. It can be argued that

[6] In a discussion on the work of Coetzee, Spivak writes that because certain groups of the formerly colonized countries have had access to the culture of imperialism "Shall we then assign to that culture, to borrow Bernard Williams' phrase, a measure of 'moral luck?' I think there can be no doubt that the answer is 'no'". Cf. Spivak (1993, p. 60). Moral luck accrues to someone who receives commendation for the larger good one appears to achieve despite questionable means one adopts. Imperialism's colossal disruption of the world (slavery, territorial invasions, political and civil repressions and massacre of native populations, depredations of local resources and calculated deployment of iniquitous political order and above all the psychic rupture through epistemic violence) for its own domestic benefit, cannot bestow any moral luck to European nations, argues Spivak.

[7] In his work, Nicholas Dirks emphasizes "the salience of the imperial archive" built in the colonial period and its extraordinary influence in systematizing caste. Cf. Dirks (2001, pp. 1–18, 296–315).

European epistemic violence disrupted prevailing cognitive sense of the colonized people through a two-pronged onslaught: denial of rationality on the one hand and stigmatization of *jati* (as caste) on the other. If the former distinguished and celebrated European intellectual heritage, the latter configured Christianity's sense of heathens. But this double attack contributed to the self-denigration of colonially educated Indians; it made them defensive and apologetic about their inherited lot. These two points can be said to offer a litmus test for postcolonial intellectual even to this day; colonial and postcolonial intelligentsia continues to be defensive on these two counts. If from Bimal Matilal to Amartya Sen these highly reputed postcolonial intellectuals devoted their energies to shore up a "theory of rationality" for India, from Gandhi to "annihilators of caste" our intelligentsia only validated caste as stigma.[8]

The chapter, by way of engaging with the "readings" of Vemana, confronts the interface between *jati* and culture. While arguing how Vemana is made over by the colonial modern protocols of reading, this chapter continues to explore the ways in which mnemotextual impulse shapes the idiom and ethos of Vemana's compositions. In Telugu literary scenario Vemana can be figured as a symptomatic moment in the internalization of double attack inaugurated by colonial violence. The chapter also indicates the survival of mnemocultural impulse and response in the dispersed compositions of Vemana.

1.7 Formative Singularities

This work hypothesizes that the mnemocultural impulse (as detailed here) that lives on in heterogeneous traditions of India might help us configure the *differentia specifica* of Indian cultural formations. Mnemocultures impel us to reflect on the filiations of biocultural formations and cultural forms. As we know, colonialism, drawing on the classical and medieval scribal and print communication systems of the West, has valorized and institutionalized these (archiving and museumizing) forms.

[8] One notices the symptomatic defensive position in such an accomplished thinker like J.N. Mohanty when he castigates caste as a stigma. Departing from the phenomenological credo that to "criticize one's tradition from another" is "inauthentic", Mohanty writes that "caste and untouchability jar with the larger humanistic core of Hindu morals"; and he goes on to suggest that "one may reinterpret the tradition so as to eliminate the jarring components and re-establish coherence". Mohanty does not entertain the fact that the reductive conception of *jati* as a stigma reflects European Christian experience of Indian biocultural formations; that the cultural heterogeneity of India over millennia is deeply woven and improvised by profound filiations between *jati*s and cultures. The unexamined guilt that has become the constitutive feature of modern Indian intellectual forecloses any attempt to reexamine the bioculturality of Indian existence. In other words, to borrow Mohanty's idiom, by definition modern Indian intellectual appears to deny the possibility of any "authentic" thought about *jati* from within. The hysteria about *jati* in general and the "dalit question" in particular shapes our politically correct contemporary intellectual stridency. Cf. Mohanty (1992, p. 275).

With writing as its emblematic sign, the centralized archive unleashed primitive accumulation (retrieval) impulse for scribal accounts in the colonial epoch and deployed a classical interpretive model that seeks genetic relation between texts and contexts.

In contrast, speech and gestural forms of communication continue to shape and structure the immensity of heterogeneous reflective, compositional performative genres (of various *jati*s) in Indian context. The colonial archive and commentary, disregarding these radically versatile forms of communication and composition, and the melopoiac thought they sustain, reduced them to two-dimensional scribal-print document of information.

The work outlined so far indicates the ensemble of nodes that we have figured in order to address specific issues concerning cultural difference. As can be seen, a comparatological vein consistently, though variedly, connects all the nodes. This work contends that as long as the question of cultural difference and the radical reflective orientation of cultures are not *re*configured, disciplinary practices in the humanities—such as (literary and art) history, criticism—remain derivative and impoverished intellectual activities. It is difficult to see how art historical and literary critical work in the Indian context can escape such limitations. They are yet to risk configuring the reflective orientation that brings forth and transfigures the (non)narrative, visual and performative creations across the subcontinent and beyond.

It must, however, be stated unequivocally here that such a configurative thinking does not assume a "background" to be already there in its pristine existence waiting to be drawn on as such. Such a background (if there can be one such ***ground***) will have to be conceived *as a task* from the context or location in which we already find ourselves—reflective contexts and locations already deeply structured by the pervasive European epistemic orientation. The postcolonial predicament is such that we are impelled to configure another orientation while caught or located in the contextures induced by European traditions of thought. Can there be an outside ***in*** such an epistemic predicament?

If the university institutionalizes the epistemic violence that disorients our cognitive sense and experience, and if Christianity has stigmatized Indian biocultural formations, how we reorient our teaching and research, and our inquiries beyond the destitute postcolonial period remains the most urgent and demanding question in our contexts. What do we do with the double but asymmetrically deployed inheritances in our locations of work? The concluding chapter of this work returns precisely to the two crucial asymptotically related themes that impelled me to undertake this work. These are the themes of *jati* (and culture as stigma) and the university (and briefly the humanities as the work of reason). As pointed out earlier, it is these very sedimented conceptions that turned the colonized/postcolonial defensive.

Indian cultural formations undermine cultural, intellectual and narrative unities. They do not abide by any (single) narrative order—or unified discursive form. Differing and distancing in idiom and existence from what one receives or inherits, heterogeneous biocultural formations proliferate generically (in every

sense of the term). The concluding chapter foregrounds the vigorous currents of *jati*-cultural springs. What constitutes *jati* is a radical differential impulse; *jati*s self-divide and individuate themselves within the matrix of the *jati* folds. As *jati*s individuate, their cultural forms and formations too receive and transform their inheritances from their intractable origins. Yet, these perennially modified, differentiated, and morphed inheritances affirm the legibility of these heterogeneous biocultural formations within the reflective and creative traditions of India.

The most irrepressible generic impulse that runs across divergent *jati* cultures is none other than the genre-defying genre called the *purana* (*"*myth*"*). Transgressing far beyond the famed 18 *purana*s (of Sanskrit *vangmaya*), each of the *jati*s (at least in Telugu *vangmaya*) has composed and performed a *purana* of its own. Quintessentially mnemocultural the *purana* genre sustains memories and genealogies from immemorial times. While elaborating the vigour and force of *jati*-cultural distinctions, this chapter brings into focus the peculiar but seminal figure that plays the *guardian of memory* among these divergent communities. This figure, discussed as a "parasite", forms a fold within the self-differentiating fold, and remains as an excluded-inside guardian in the *jati* formation. While reiterating the fundamental significance of biocultural distinctions beyond the stigmatizations that prevent thinking, this chapter engages with the *kula purana*—called *Jamba-purana*—of the Madiga *jati* and highlights the singular figures who guard this inheritance even to this day. The deeper undercurrent of this work unconditionally affirms the critical significance of these biocultural custodians of mnemocultures to move beyond the abyss of postcolonial destitution. Chapter 10, the concluding chapter, is titled *Close Ups: Approaching Critical Humanities*.

Unless and until a rigorous effort to radically reconfigure reflective/cultural orientation is undertaken beyond the left–right pedestrian bipedalism, the singularity of reflective and visual idioms that proliferated in the subcontinent and beyond over millennia will remain violently appropriated or erased in the metaphysical-theological universalism now institutionalized. Such an appropriation barely addresses the enigmatic issues—prevalence of a non-narrative impulse, indifference to visualization of graphic-plastic forms, and absence of desire for meta-narrative reckoning or "theoretical" drive, the irrelevance of truth/art binarism, and the insistence on the body as the absolute medium and effect for the transfigurement of sense—that we discussed earlier.

It might be possible that the (non)narrative, visual and performative traditions of the subcontinent (as resources of human experience) proliferating in significantly heterogeneous idioms, with their elliptical assemblages, their intractable transfigurements, and embodied and enacted modes might open up ways for a reconfiguration of the singularities of cultural/reflective orientations. The reasoning imagination that puts to work this orientation in the domains of image, music and performative might help us move beyond the impasse of the art/truth schemata which is pushed institutionally to a universal status now. Transfiguration of these domains requires sensitivity to their intimations and a conviction to affirm the impulse that elliptically and enigmatically circulates ***in/visible*** idioms around us.

1.8 Of Critical Humanities

Caught within the discursive and institutional structures that represent the cultures that faced colonialism, this work devotes itself to forge a “mnemocultural response”. Such a response can only be accented as a heuristic—a risky hypothesis (if not a theoretical fiction) at the most. Working from within the structures put in place by the violence of colonialism, one cannot hope to advance a pure or Archimedean outside untouched by the inherited violence. As the modes of being of the parasite pockets within the folds of the *jati* live on guarding immemorial inheritances, it should be possible to inhabit the alien habitat of the institutionalized humanities with mnemocultural impulses. This work moves with the conviction that living together in our chosen or endowed or condemned habitat differently should be possible. Hence, the effort to rearticulate Plato’s (and Stiegler’s) problem—of relating anamnesis and hypomnemsis—differently.

The colonial epoch unleashes an asymmetric confrontation between cultures of memory and the culture of the archive. This epistemic confrontation between mnemocultures that performatively embody memories in speech and gestural forms and the culture of the archive that objectifies and discursively institutionalizes memories is still an unexamined and un-thought event. It remains un-rethought as the violent translational mechanisms of the archival-representational colonial transplant-effect continue to be dominant in the form of the university. With the acceleration of the archival techniques and capabilities, with the consolidation of archival capital (with unabated primitive accumulation modes), the asymmetry between mnemopraxial cultures and communications on the one hand and the mnemotechnical dominant on the other gets violently aggravated and orchestrated. In all these matters the university and the humanities are at stake.

At the end of his talk on the “profession of faith”, Derrida specifies seven tasks for the new humanities (Derrida 2002, pp. 230–234). Six out of these seven precisely deal with the European legacy (concerning concepts of literature, democracy, profession and professoriate, constative knowledge, sovereignty and performative acts), and the seventh one is the non-ipsocratic, improbable impulse, that is to come. Displacing the division between the author and receiver, Derrida points out that the “signatories are also addressees”. The six of seven precepts of the new humanities—in terms of legacies and heritages—unequivocally affirm Europe as signatory and addressee. Derrida does not in any particular way delimit this heritage in referring to the addressees. What is the place of the unintended, unacknowledged, disavowed recipients of these precepts? How does one countersign these violent signatures of an ipsocentric regime from an illegitimate location?

Given that time and again noble philosophers, able scholars, critical thinkers, and highly paid academics, repeatedly announce that the profession of the humanities, its concepts, categories, methods, contents, canons, discourses,

institutions and its entire technics and time are the legacy of Europe[9]—the set of questions that barely finds an answer in such concerted thinking is: *who then are we? How do we (if there is a "we" at all), caught in the labyrinths of this establishment from an outside, reckon ourselves? If the vocation, profession and the destination of what we do and what we say are the creations of a Europe what are we doing in what we believe to be our habitats/locations/contexts? Where and who are we in this patented institution of the humanities?* Critical humanities impel such a set of questions from the margins of European institutional and discursive structures.

The university is a humanistic concept—it is both the effect of and the arena for celebrating human potential and mastery. The university generates and circulates human productivity. Yet, the university, in its essence and in history, is fundamentally an objectifying, archontic institution. It is aimed at producing and accumulating positive knowledges. Irrespective of the discipline, the dominant current of the university remains from its inception positivistic and referentialist; that is, the university was authorized to gather comprehensive and verifiable knowledge. The idea of the university as a repository and generative source of totality of knowledge flourished and regulated the transplantation of the university all over the world in the last two centuries. This classical concept of the university is in crisis for some time now.

The crisis in the humanities in recent years can be figured via two related strands: Institutional and conceptual. The institutional strand, which has global relevance, itself is constituted by two inter-related components. The institution as a pragmatic, organizational or regulative structure that administers the operation of knowledge production in a professionalized system is the legacy of European modernity and its co-emergent colonialism. But the very conception of an institution devoted to the generation and dissemination of knowledge through demarcated disciplines (of either Cartesian pure rational knowledge or of Kantian "lower" and "higher" faculties) (Kant 1992; cf. also Derrida 2004a, b) and involved in training professionals contingent upon the state patronage, is itself a part of modern European intellectual adventure. This adventure itself draws on, as pointed out earlier, and modifies deeper currents of European cultural history. In other words, though they are separable, the institutional and conceptual strands can be seen as co-constitutive.

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[9] The "Enlightenment paternity", writes David Damrosch, drawing on the work of Allan Bloom, "is only half the story, for the mother of the university was the medieval Church…." Damrosch goes on to add: "If you scratch beneath the surface of the contemporary academic entrepreneur, you are likely to find deeply held ecclesiastical beliefs, even monastic attitudes" (Damrosch 1995, pp. 18–19). Anthony Grafton's extended work provides a thick description of this Christian scholarly parentage ("Humanism", the Republic of Letters etc.,) of the university. Cf. Grafton (2009) for a celebratory account of this very heritage. It is precisely this theologically governed heritage that S.N. Balagangadhara's work is tirelessly unravelling as a prolegomenon for affirming the possibility of a comparative science of cultures (a science which can come about only when cultures learn to describe the world with an understanding of their cultural background).

Perhaps the crisis of the humanities can be traced back to a primal scene of European antiquity. The scene concerns the foundational violence of the hierarchic division between reason and imagination (between philosophy and poetry, constative and performative, articulations) that was validated epistemically and later institutionalized through the university worldwide. By the time of Plato, we learn that the inherited modes of recitation of Homer and Hesiod as a part of education were on the vane. That is, song and performance as modes of knowing, as performative-cognitive strategies were becoming unworthy of credit (cf. Detienne 2007, pp. 30–32; Vernant 2006, pp. 399–402). At one level, the crisis in the universities, of the humanities (in the West) concerns this heritage of calculative reasoning that accumulated positive archival knowledges through/in the university. But the crisis gets managed in the West by dismantling or downsizing of the humanities or redesigning the university to go telematic—a calculated move that today aims to invade life itself for its archival potential.

The university and its component disciplines in India circulate and replicate themselves in accord with the template installed in the colonial epoch. Capitulated to the expedient discourses and manoeuvres and regulated by the calculative mechanisms of number and classification, the university expands its ill-thought regime. It has increasingly become apparent that the university has little to offer—except the inflated degrees with declining value—to its expanding constituencies in terms of epistemic mind-change to alleviate our destitution of postcolonial times. For even to meditate on such cultural tectonic changes across epistemic rupture that the European transplant effect has erupted, one needs to rekindle and nurture intimacy with the idiomatic singularities of what the discrete but related *genos* have spread across mnemoculturally—in speech and gesture, in performance and artefact over millennia.

The transplant-effect has ruptured the idiom and the modular humanities have done little to learn to suture the ruptured fabric of these discarded and discredited multiplicities of idiom. On the contrary, the class-mobile "beneficiary" of these modular humanities, the denegating inheritor of these stigmatized communities, is tacitly (and often willingly, in complicity) groomed to distance and differentiate himself/herself from the singularity of his/her cultural genealogies. The humanities rarely engaged with the ruptured idiom outside the received European or Europeanized modules (such as history, anthropology and folkloristics). The humanities are yet to prepare for learning from the reasoning imagination that textures the verbal and visual idioms of the ruptured epistemes.

1.9 The *Chance* of Crisis

Inattentive to such radical rhythms of reasoning imagination that pulsate through the cultures of memory in Indic traditions, most of academic disciplinary productions strive to measure these rhythms with the normative parameters of the implicit (European) cultural referent that guide their work. They are often busy

with polarizing the elite from the folk (and of late, with the dalit animus), hope to champion the "folk" against the elite, vernacular against Sanskrit, woman against man as if simple reversals would transform inherited legacies. Also unconcerned with the deeper epistemic currents that come forth in the idiomatic generic formations of mnemocultures, and their performative textures, scholars tend to abstract overdetermined motifs (such as the heroic, the agentive, identity, the canonical, etc.) from the complex of proliferative genres of multiple *jati*s.

Although the institution and its sedimented conceptual structure is now well entrenched across the globe, it largely functioned in two expedient ways in non-European contexts. Either the institution remained resolutely impervious to the epistemic cultures that received it or it simply provided a mechanism for appropriating the heterogeneous epistemic singularities into the disciplinary grid of the institution. The institution failed to confront these singularities beyond their objectification and appropriation in the emergent disciplinary fields.

Similarly, the non-European contexts are yet to comprehend or unravel the conceptual (or philosophical and political) presuppositions of the university from the locations of their cultures (what does it mean to, and how does one, teach the humanities in the Arab world, Asia and Africa?). On the contrary, these contexts lent themselves to be configured as objects of information (Mudimbe 1993). Science and reason as the gifts of the university dispelling religious dogma and generating positive knowledges captured the social imaginary of the colonial and postcolonial citizen subject.[10] The postcolonial state patronizes and perpetuates this imaginary through bureaucratic technocratic regulative mechanisms.

As a philosophical and political institution the university is preeminently a humanities (and indeed humanistic) institution. Its emergence and vocation are essentially bonded to the question of the human ("ends of man"). But the humanities in postcolonial India have not grappled with this Europeanizing-humanizing conceptual heritage critically. Consequently, the humanities are yet to figure the promise of the university beyond seeking accommodation for more insular positivistic channels of knowledge production (such as postcolonial studies, cultural studies, women's studies, dalit or social exclusion studies, etc.).

Given that it has now become possible to thematize the crisis of the university, what are the possible ways in which the humanities teaching and research can be re-configured in the (postcolonial) Indian context today? Given that the primary task of the humanities is to unravel the modes of constituting the human (and engaging with the heterogeneous singular human reflections and their material articulations), what are the effective ways in which one can draw on cultural

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[10] In fact it can be argued that the period of decolonization created more space for such social science institutions (largely Cold War U.S.-based area studies) and researches than initiate any rethinking of the colonial humanities teaching. From Edward Shils to Andre Beteille, the social science oriented accounts of the university hardly addressed the epistemic disruption that the university initiated in the colonial/postcolonial context. They merely reinforced an epistemophilic model of the university as the most covetable institution. Cf. Shils (1961), Beteille (2010). For a radical critique of the social science paradigm, cf. Balagangadhara (1985).

singularities to configure the question of being human today? What opportunities and modes can one draw on or bring forth for a transformative reception of epistemic singularities in rethinking the humanities today? What are the ways and means through which one can re-orient the university from its received politico-philosophical legacy of Europe? Also, one should hasten to add, can this reorientation be worked out without alibi, without yielding to the presumed sovereignty of any single culture? Can the university receive unconditional thinking in the humanities—a thinking that is not devoted to gaining sovereign mastery through knowledge production?

If the field of humanities is obliged to deal with human creativity, reflection and human invention, human utterance and artefacts, and above all grapple with the question of being human, shouldn't the humanities in non-European locations begin to reflect on the human creations and inventions and above all their accounts of the question of being human and their relation to the enigma of symbolization from their discarded and denigrated experiences and practices? In other words, is the humanities (the university) in India in a position to respond with responsibility to the creations, and reflections of multiple singularities of the heteronormative communities? Are they in a position to measure their inventive response to the epistemic question of being human beyond the calculus of (un-thought) disciplinary rationality (say, of folklore, history and ethnography)? In short, are they in a position to unravel the epistemic confrontation that the violence that the colonial epoch had initiated between embodied and enacted memories and the objectified and archival inscriptions? An unfortunate **No!** to these questions indicates the depth of our destitution.

Given the genealogy and limit of the humanities, how does one reconfigure or reconstellate this received heritage in our changing situation and in the contexts of other disenfranchised heritages? How does one rethink the pedagogical and critical tasks in one's context? How does one rearticulate the work of hand and face, speech and gesture, the alithic resources of difference in the current conjuncture of the dominant global/digital media—the ascendant hypomnemata that controls memories? Also, how to negotiate with the question of technology beyond the great divide between the essence of thought (episteme) and technics? What is the place of non-Europe in the aftermath of Europeanization of the planet?

As this work contends, European philosopher-historians tell us that it is precisely by privileging the face over the hand that the Western heritage formed itself into what it is now (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, Chap. 6). That is, by demarcating and differentiating speech from gesture, by relating the latter as an illustrative or subsequent form of the former, by making it derivative, that the thought of the West is said to have grown. Further, within the domain of speech, by separating myth from other mélange of registers, by marking out prose from other idiom and above all by cordoning off *muthos* from *logos*, that the Greeks are said to have founded the European heritage. It is a heritage that envelops us all now more or less.

Perhaps it would be a more enabling act to describe our situation as at once *outside* and *in* this enveloping European heritage. If this is so how does one rethink

the "founding" moment in the context of cultural practices that are not completely controlled by hierarchic binaries? How do we engage with these radical uses of the body and language—albeit stylized and contextually formulated—in refiguring the futures of our pasts? What do we do with this work of culture that we are exposed to?

1.10 What Do You Do?

What impels and moves this work, it must be stated, is not in the main some mere preservationist nostalgic ideal or some envious rage. What forced this work is the actual situation of teaching and inquiring into the humanities from the location of Indian classroom. It seems to me that the Indian classroom is one of the most challenging sites for testing our reflections. These reflections may pertain to the pedagogical domain involving issues such as: what one teaches, how one reads, what one writes about, indeed how one listens, how/what one inquires into. They may also pertain to one's political and ethical concerns of living today. The challenge largely comes from the non-metropolitan classroom situations. For, unlike in the metropolitan cities, these classrooms cannot be treated as unified or homogenous ones. The metropolitan classrooms are often composed of (relatively) affluent and class-mobile students.

Moffusil or rural universities complicate the teaching scenario. Educational programmes and teaching methods, reared in the colonial epoch are not oriented towards these marginal universities. Their goal was to prepare a corps of literate subjects who facilitated the governance of the colonized. These literate subjects also form the conduit for imparting selectively the culture of imperial metropolis. Such a conception of education had no place in it for the radical cultural divergence that forms the subcontinental Indian existence and experience. Consequently, the modes and the material with which our educational models function have become deeply disoriented and disorienting practices. They have not offered any significant direction and rationale for education in our decolonized society.

It seems to me that the real challenge of Indian classroom comes from its heterogeneous composition. When we carefully observe our student composition, we are bound to become aware that it is impossible to treat the group as a homogeneous one. Our classrooms are composed of divergent *jati*s and communities with extended genealogies of robust longevity. The classroom impels us to rethink our colonized conceptions of *jati* or our biocultural formations. After the European stigmatization of caste, our modern intellectual ventures have barely attempted to engage with this enigmatic cultural configuration.

Secondly, expedient political decisions have formally made access to the university possible to many communities, and a large number entering the university includes first generation members of their respective communities. But the university is barely prepared intellectually to attend to them: in the Indian context, especially in the humanities, the university is yet to inquire into the intellectual,

politico-philosophical genealogy of this transplanted institutional structure. We are nowhere near seriously initiating inquiries into the very rationale of teaching whatever we are teaching, let alone address questions about what and how we should teach and justify why we should teach a certain kind of things. In short, we are yet to realize the necessity of an autonomous reflective inquiry from the locations of cultures where we teach and research. Colonial rupture and postcolonial destitution continue to regulate the institutionalized work of the humanities.

One insistent current of this project is, as it emerges from teaching and researching in the Indian classroom to pulse towards ***critical humanities***, that weaves together the voice and gesture, idiom and performance, artefact and memory, to rearticulate the received humanities beyond the colonial rupture. The critical humanities initiatives aim at reconfiguring the humanities in crisis and reorienting teaching and research from receiving ends of cultures that faced colonialism. If *jan-jati* cultural complexes are the enduring source of creativity and reflection in the Indian subcontinent (and beyond) over millennia, the field of humanities must strive to learn to explore the singularity of this relationship and affirm a priori their (*jan-jati* and their cultures) inheritances without alibi. Only then the humanities from the receiving ends will be able to continue and move beyond their European legacy.

The ensemble of critical humanities is not a discipline of thought or a regional science; it is an impulse oriented more to engage with and unravel the condition and crisis that prevail in the teaching and research in the humanities. The force of critical humanities impels us to unravel what we do and what we (or others) think of what we do on an elliptical planetary orbit. Above all, the force of the ensemble exposes us to the non-cohering, untotalizable, and not easily formalizable cultural formations and cultural forms that critically (in the double sense—threatened but seminal) live on and diversify modes of being in the world.

An important concern of critical humanities pertains to the relation between technology/techné/technics and anthropos. If the dominant conception of the human privileges reason, logos or sovereignty as the determining factors—and if today's digital machine can more efficaciously calculate and regulate reason, what remains of the human anymore? How can we rearticulate the teaching and research in the humanities beyond the great divide of two cultures? Above all, can the experience of mnemocultures from non-Abrahamic traditions be drawn to reconfigure the relation between techné and the human? The work of critical humanities calls for epistemic comparisons—where cultures can engage with each other from their differential backgrounds.

Such a topos, it is hoped, would provide strategic opportunities to put to work the double inheritances (dominant European and displaced mnemocultural) singularly and collaboratively, inside and outside the disciplines of the humanities and the institution called the university: *without alibis*. This work is conceived as a modest effort (without alibis) to sketch such a critical topos. But it must be pointed out that as memory cannot be easily territorialized this topos is a space without a delimited territory (let alone a nation-state geo-political territory). For, memory, in a sense, is nothing. Let us move into the *atopos* of memory, then.

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Part I
Signatures of Memory

Chapter 2
Configurations of Memory and the Work of Difference

Abstract In exploring cultural difference through cultures of memory, this chapter discusses European conceptions of memory and technics. While engaging with the classical debate concerning orality and literacy (from Plato to Stiegler) it points to the historical undermining of embodied mnemocultural traditions in European heritage. The chapter offers a mnemocultural critique of Derrida's conception of "writing" and Stiegler's account prosthetics.

Keywords Gesture and speech · Writing · Plato · Derrida · Stiegler

> Performative or practical knowledge is the ability to act recursively in the world. The social environment created in such a culture will itself be recursive, exhibiting the properties of recursive systems. The history of this culture, of the coming-to-be of a people, just like the way it is with the West, is the story of the emergence, crystallization, and the development of recursively structured learning configuration.
>
> Balagangadhara (1994, p. 465).

This chapter aims to address some concerns regarding teaching the humanities in today's postcolonial situation. These concerns are composed here by way of a strategically configured domain that brings together the thematics of Europe and its others (in this case, heterogeneous India), cultural singularities, historical violence, memory, the body and idiom; and we shall call this domain mnemo-cultures. Mnemocultures are cultures of memory that survive and proliferate in immemorial communicational forms of speech and gesture. These cultures move with and live on memory.

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2.1 Cultures of Memory

Memories are intangible. Two distinct kinds of memories bind and unbind, continue and discontinue the phenomenal and non-phenomenal relations and existences in the world. One set contains externalized and objectified memories, which are created by the work of the hand and face. The other set figures the enacted and embodied memories that circulate across all sorts of materialities and whose relays are intractable and indeterminable. Lithic or glyphic technologies make possible the objectification and archivation of the memory. In contrast to that, the a-lithic "technologies" (of gesture and speech) articulate the work of the face and the body. The lithic mode preserves memories externally, outside the body in material substrates and structures. The a-lithic mode does not quantify and objectually externalize memories; it brings forth memories through embodied articulations. Here the body is the most decisive and articulate substrate.

Although both the modes can be noticed in all cultures, based on their prominence or the status accorded them in different cultures, civilizational or cultural differences can be tracked and their differential mnemo-archival articulations can be grasped. All the changing forms of articulating memory are the result of two specific acts on organic or inorganic material substance: the work of hand and the work of face; of gesture (graphics) and language. If archeo-paleontology tries to track these manifestations of memory, archive-museum shelters and guards these exteriorized material markers. Greek and Judaic traditions of memory, for instance, privilege the objectual and archival drive and marginalize the mnemocultural pulsions.[1]

2.2 Lithic Ventures

Memory in Indic traditions, as will be shown later, significantly differs from the Greek and Judaic traditions of antiquity. If memory has entropic status in Greek antiquity, it is configured as traumatic in Judaic culture. Let us briefly dwell on these differences before sketching the larger argument of this work.

In philosophical accounts of memory in Greek thought, memory is the soul's quest or struggle to return to its heavenly abode from where it is banished. The

[1] (I am not taking into account the more ancient Egyptian cultural memory here. This is because the Europe that expands its intellectual regime is predominantly formed by Greek-Jew [and Christian] lineages. All the major thinkers of Europe confine themselves to this lineage in their accounts of European thought.) Although archaeologists argue that the "modernity of human behavior" can be traced back to the "liberation of memory" achieved by the "storage of symbolism outside the brain", in the petroglyphs or rock drawings of paleoart, such modes of externalization must be distinguished from the archive-museum based politico-epistemic dominations of modern European regimes. The paleoart was certainly not driven by any form of "archive fever". Cf. Bednarik (2006). Also cf. Leroi-Gourhan (1993), especially the chapter "The Language of Forms"; also Derrida (1976), esp. "Of Grammatology as a Positive Science" (pp. 74–93); and Derrida (1995).

banished soul descends to the earth in graded (or degraded) and stratified division and occupies differently marked bodies. The best will remember and yearn for the return more than the worst; and the latter will indulge and rejoice their degraded bodily imprisonment. But this is a philosopher's version of memory that gains privilege at a certain moment in Greek culture.[2]

The pre-Socratics had recognizable continuities (although literacy was making inroads already) with a cultural ethos that sustained itself in a different mode in archaic Greece. In the earlier mode, the goddess of memory (Mnemosyne) touched the poet and released him into a melopoeiac realm. The poet-singer thus inspired and intimated had access to the innermost past and the indefinite future, in the moment of his existence. He wandered along singing rhapsodically and performing ecstatically the vision he was exposed to. This inspired memory recalled and recounted the past of the beings and their deeds (Pythagoras and Empedocles could recount their multiple lives and experiences) (Vernant 2006a; Detienne 1999a; Hunter and Rutherford 2009).

The bard was a medium which connected the present to a past and paved the way for a future for generations. Alethéia ("poetic or bardic truth") and Mnemosyne were deeply filiated and were opposed to Lethé and forgetfulness. These "masters of truth" and memory (as the bard/poet along with the diviner and the king of justice were called in ancient Greece) (Detienne 1999b) were displaced by a new tribe of seekers of truth called philosophers. The masters of truth enacted and performed their intimations. Whereas the seekers of truth sought to propound truth by verbal postulates and logical demonstrations ("I am only a common man seeking truth", says Socrates in his loaded, ironic utterance to Ion).[3] The gap between the two became unbridgeable by the time of Aristotle.

Memory is no longer the lively intimation actively performed in an immersive mode, through sonic and choreographic waves—but a mental category to be invaded by the logical verbal protocols of knowledge. As language, memory too gets grammaticized, discretized for analysis. Even this privileged access to memory was reserved for the dialectician—the one who ought to be most capable of remembering and the one who (with the promise of memory drawing him to his original abode) prepares himself for death. Philosophy was a preparation for death

[2] The philosopher in question here is Socrates and the account of memory here refers to Socrates' discussion of the relation between memory and dialectics in the *Phaedrus* (Plato 1952c, pp. 124–125).

[3] Plato's *Ion* demonstrates the epistemic difference that was beginning to emerge between two modes of thinking in ancient Greece. This difference in this dialogue, however, is framed entirely from the vantage of the philosopher Socrates. The rhapsode Ion is grilled by Socrates to make explicit the "principles", the general (i.e., epistemic) basis of his recitations. Socrates ridicules Ion for singing without knowing; his lively performance is said to be devoid of "art" (techné) and knowledge (episteme). Ion is either a deceiver or an inspired (that is, without being conscious about what he does) person. He does something without knowing what he is doing. Socrates turns the rhapsode Ion into a straw figure by exposing his ignorance of "art" (techné) and "knowledge" (episteme)—the weapons of the new master of truth (philosopher). Cf. Plato (1952b, pp. 142–148). The figure of Ion will obliquely move in, as much as the Shadow of Plato falls on, this entire work on mnemocultures.

in this entropic vision of memory in the work of Plato. Despite his own defense of memory, his apparent celebration of the tradition of memory (mneme and *muthos*) and the pivotal figure who remembers most in his dialogues—Socrates—Plato's work confirms the entropic vision of memory.

Although Socrates never wrote a word (at least none was preserved—but he does draw geometric figures in *Meno*), Plato (2002) records and preserves or creates and archives everything that Socrates is supposed to have said. It is neither memory nor recitation but entirely Plato's *writing* that handed down Socrates to posterity. One notices a certain ambiguity in Plato towards the mnemocultural media (of speech and gesture). While he appears to defend speech against writing in the *Phaedrus*,[4] he denounces singing poets and musical choruses in the *Laws*. In other words, Plato is aiming at salvaging speech (logos) from mnemocultural *muthos* for the philosopher of truth. Hence his denunciation of song and performative cultures and championing of speech (rational speech).[5] We shall return to this ambiguity later in this chapter.

By the time of Aristotle memory is firmly a philosophical psychological theme for conceptual speculations and archival preservations (cf. Sorabji 1972/2004; also Krell (1990, pp. 13–23).[6] If philosophy turns memory into its object of thought, history—recording of past accounts—takes over the mantle of performative memory. Literacy, the new art of managing memory irrupts the mnemoscape and inscribes itself in stone. Recitation of Homer, a well-entrenched practice for centuries, gets displaced by the time of Plato. Classical Greece goes through the decisive displacement of its archaic past and inaugurates the denigration of mnemocultures.[7]

[4] The *Phaedrus*, it must be said, presents an ambiguous picture about writing. Although Socrates, citing the Egyptian myth about writing, seems to discount writing, when we closely look at the beginning of the dialogue, we notice that he insists on Phaedrus *reading* out from the written document about Lycias' account of love. Denying Phaedrus "hope of practicing my art" of oratory, Socrates demands: "but you must first of all show what you have in your left hand under your cloak, for that roll, as I suspect, is the actual discourse. Now, much as I love you, I would not have you suppose that I am going to have your memory exercised at my expense, if you have Lysias himself here." That is, the physically absent Lysias himself can be present in the recorded manuscript and Socrates wants to access that carried over presence from the hidden pages. Succumbing to the pressure of the master, Phaedrus says "if I am to read…" Plato (1952c, p. 116). Curiously, this scene of writing does not receive much of Derrida's or even Stiegler's attention.

[5] It must be pointed out that Plato's position with regard to writing and its relation to memory remains ambivalent. On the one hand Plato is the philosopher who writes and records and on the other hand he defends memory against the art of writing. On the one hand he can't tolerate the singers and bards (his Oedipal tussle with Homer) and on the other hand he makes Socrates dream about practising music in prison in the last few days of his life. Cf. Plato (1952a, d).

[6] Jean Pierre Vernant chronicling the changing fate of memory in Greek antiquity argues that by the time of Aristotle memory gets dissociated with traditional techniques of remembrance (*meleté* and *mnemé*), its filiation with the soul, its discerning intellection and becomes more and more bonded with the senses (as a perceptual category). (Vernant 2006b, pp. 130–140).

[7] Xenophanes and Heraclitus denounce Homer and Hesiod on the one hand, and the "oral order" on the other. (cf. Ferrari 1984). Ferrari critically reviews the orality/literacy debate in this article. He critiques Eric Havelock's biased reading of pre-Socratics as belonging to oral traditions. Ferrari's point is that Havelock insufficiently attends to the impact of literacy on pre-Socratics.

2.3 A Mosaic Distinction

If Greek antiquity provided one decisive root of European tradition, monotheistic Judaism provides another such root. Judaic memory configures a "normative past". It persistently recalls a traumatic history. This memorialized trauma is not the work of the catastrophe of decimation that the Jews were subjected to in the recent history. The 20th century trauma of Jews seems to be an aggravated repetition of a much more primal trauma that seems to haunt Jewish memory. The Bible inscribes that primal trauma of Jews and their life and suffering in Egypt as slaves (a state which itself was the result of a more originary trauma of the sin). Jewish memory is regulated by this indelible horror of a traumatized psyche. That horror of the past became a concentrated narrative experience and a warning for the Jews.

As distinct and chosen people every Jew is required to internalize the codified historical memory (because the Bible and what it records/recounts is believed to be a "true" historical occurrence) of the experience; and every Jew is induced to learn the words of the Torah by heart and thus become conscious of the memory, nurture and endure it. The words of the Torah "shall be upon thy heart"—inscribed in the heart and soul. Deuteronomy in the Bible transmits this codified traumatic memory (Assman 2006, pp. 1–31, esp. "Monotheism, Memory, and Trauma," and "Cultural Texts Suspended Between Writing and Speech"; Assmann 2008).[8] As Freud the Jew discovered, trauma, whether real or imaginary (that is, whether one really experiences trauma in one's own life or not)—has the tendency to haunt the subject. The traumatic and violent Judaic memory is inscribed in stone. Moses the patriarch authenticates and transmits this lithic memory.[9]

But memory as such is nothing; only articulations of memory constitute cultural difference. In contrast to the externally stored lithic memories of European past, embodied or enacted memories are not just a peculiarity of the "life-world" as such (whether human/plant/animal). Such memories are inescapable in the "lives" of geo, hydro and atmospheric formations that compose the planet that houses us. In fact the so-called life form itself is the effect of mutations (evolution) within the unagentive and unarchived, memories (inherent/inherited qualities) of these planetary forces. It would be a challenge to track the relations that connect these planetary memories.

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[8] It must however be pointed out that Jewish cultural history is surfeit with song cultures. The three techniques of cantillation, psalmody and modal chant were central to the transmission of the Hebrew liturgy. The first and second Temples were associated with songs in varying degrees (sometime with musical instruments and sometimes without). Enchantment was achieved in the synagogue by the chants (cf. Levine 2010).

[9] Dominic LaCapra (2009, pp. 192, 220) contrasting "traditional" societies from Western ones thinks that in the case of the latter "there may be something like transhistorical or structural trauma," some kind of disruptive fissure (such as original sin, transition from nature to culture, separation from mother, crucifixion, "revolutions", etc.). LaCapra does not see such structuring ruptures in "traditional" societies. We shall see later how such tropes of rupture structure European descriptions of India.

Myths, folktales and "ethnoreligions" are replete with intimations of these relations and permeations. The figural set of the *mahabhuta*s (primal elements) in the Sanskrit tradition offers a dynamic web that weaves relations, associations and bonds across the elemental forces and the tangible forms of the planet.[10] Today the remarkable Brazilian philosopher, Manuel de Landa, offers a "poetics of relation" across the diversity of "historical" memorial formations that surround and compose us (de Landa 1997). These memories, while indicating the limits of the planetary forces leave open possible relays into the infinite rhythms and formations of the universe. The "finite" biological archive's articulation of the traces of infinite forces and memories that live on across the circulating planetary bodies is rarely explored. Myth and religion are still the resources for reflection on these articulations for many; in other words, imagination still intimates us with these regions. But to explore these archives of planetary relations—the very nature and concept of science would need a rearticulation.

Straddling the two forms of the archive, but blurring their boundaries circulates and permeates the archive of "ancestral memories". These memory-traces are not the biological continuities but the equally formidable transgenerational inheritances of a demarcated/differentiated community. Embodied memories of this kind are not just what an individual acquires through conscious learning in a life-time. But they are, as Freud writes in his most hesitant and adventurous text, *Moses and Monotheism* (1985), they are the "acquired characters" of ancestry, trans-individual memories and received experiences. These *guna*s (quality or property) as the Sanskrit tradition would call the "pre-historical" receptions, however discontinuous or even discordant these memory traces might appear to be with the "biological archive", Freud (1985, p. 343) insisted on their formative role in the formation of psyche, their "*constitutional* factor in the individual" (emphasis in original).

Reflecting on the genesis of monotheism, Freud writes: "the archaic heritage of human beings comprises not only dispositions but also subject-matter—memory-traces of the experience of earlier generations. In this way the compass as well as the importance of the archaic heritage would be significantly extended" (Freud 1985, p. 345). These phylogenic memory-traces, sedimented and internalized, manifest as near instinctual recurrences in gesture and speech, in language and graphics, in the immemorial work of hand and face. In the Indian traditions ritual and recitational practices carry the legacy of this archaic heritage and surviving memory traces. These traces move across the embodied and externalized memories, but also beyond them to the other finite and infinite spheres of elemental forces. The movement of life itself is extended by these non-biological

[10] The most succinct and comprehensive formulation of these relations could found in *Samkhyakarika* of Iswarakrishna. The *Karika* conceives these elemental relations and their coming into being in the phenomenal form of the body complex along with an irreducible alterity in prominently gendered and erotic terms (cf. Koteswarasarma 1996). In this work, the critical centrality of the body in Sanskrit mnemocultures (the question of what one does with one's body) is partly grasped from this *Karika*.

discontinuous relays—called epigenetic transmissions—contend some theorists in the life sciences today.[11]

Immemorial articulations of life emerge in the embodied forms of acoustic and gestural rhythms, visual and verbal performatives of the being; they are the monstrations of existence. Yet, these articulations of such magnitude essentially remained in the grip of the sciences that privilege the human faculties of reason and evolution. The human sciences of history and anthropology paved passages and confined the approaches to these tectonic rhythms of unfathomable duration. Philosophy as systemic thought barely attended directly to these intimations. But as we have tried to sketch earlier, philosophy as such could come into existence only after it successfully (and violently) overcame or displaced the cultures and modes of being that prevailed earlier. The division of *muthos* from logos suggests the rise of first philosophy. The great beginnings of Western philosophy, contends Heidegger, emerged in the process of overcoming "its extreme opposite, the mythical in general and the Asiatic in particular" (quoted in Mehta 1985, p. 245).[12] Despite Heidegger's celebrated turn to the pre-Socratics, his investment in archaic speech and song, and above all, his life-long contestation of the principle of calculative reason, his work does not figure passageways to rearticulate the mnemocultures of Europe in particular and their survival elsewhere in general.

But the singular philosopher, Derrida, who admiringly, if agonistically, grappled with Heidegger and unravelled his investments in the archaic and metaphysical, overturned and displaced the violent division of speech and writing, *muthos* and logos, and decisively aligned logos with speech. In other words, he pushed the violent division much further into the past beyond Plato. Strategically he undermined the privilege that the tradition accorded to speech; contesting such privilege, he radicalized the notion of *writing* which is said to have suffered discredit in European heritage. In this epochal context of rearticulating the mnemotechnical tradition, in the light of Derrida's counter-signing of his European heritage, it is worthwhile asking: Can there be a place for mnemocultures in the colossal work of Derrida? Can the strategies of deconstruction—of overturning and displacing the existing structure—remain hospitable to these cultural memories? The next section

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[11] Eva Jablonka contends that there are therefore at least four dimensions of evolution. Along with the DNA lines, the neglected heritable resources are the non-DNA ("daughter cells") paths, the behavioural transmission (as in the case of animals), and symbol-based inheritances (such as language and gesture) play substantial role in the evolution of life forms, argues Jablonka (Jablonka and Lamb 2006). Also of more direct relevance here is the work of Bernard Stiegler (1998).

[12] Plato, who inaugurates the tradition, asserts that "philosophy begins when one stops 'telling a story,' that is defining entities by recourse to some other entities, as is done in the presocratic doctrines of Being" (cf. Dastur 1998). Historicizing this move from myth to philosophy, Kirk et al. (1957/2006) thematize this as a transition from "the closed traditional society (which in its archetypal form is an oral society in which the telling of tales is an important instrument of stability and analysis) and towards an open society in which the values of the past become relatively unimportant and radically fresh opinions can be formed of the community itself and of its expanding environment" (pp. 72–74).

aims at taking Derrida elsewhere (from his cherished Europe-centred cultural formations) and sounding mnemocultural questions in the portals of deconstruction.

2.4 Derrida Elsewhere

Derrida's immense work persistently and with patience unraveled how the diverse lines of inquiry in the human sciences kept intact as guardrails a specific line of thought—the theologico-metaphysical inquiry that operates with a pre-comprehension of origin and significance.

Learning from him that the contexts, events and signatures that weave our textures of reflection must be set to work in contexts of our own singular performative enactments, it should be possible to move Derrida elsewhere from his own Europe-centred claims of heritage; it should be possible to take him elsewhere to another, heterogeneous trace structure of memory, to another barely understood a-normative palimpsest of memory traces to interface his (lithic) memory with mnemocultural experience.

Thought in a certain sense, stated Derrida (1976, p. 93), means nothing. Yet one learns from his work that thought is the effect of modes of communication; thought is also an articulation of inheritances. Communicational modes carve or inflect the course of thinking. Yet thinking itself or thought as such is irreducible to the determined modes and materials of thought. Earlier we have identified the modes of articulation broadly as lithic and alithic. Although both modes are filiated to the body, and both constitute the externalized memory, they can be differentiated as the gestural-graphic work of the hand and verbal-gestural work of the face. Reflective practices and traditions depend on the articulation of the lithic and alithic modes. Literacy and discursive philosophy, for instance, believed to be the boon of lithic technique of writing, are the celebrated tools of European civilizational demarcation from its others. The alphabetic writing is said to be the mark of European distinction: "alphabetic writing supporting the history of the development of geometric thought" (Stiegler 2001, p. 257). Archives are the granaries of alphabetic writing.

The lithic work of graphics and the alithic vocalic expression are, however, deeply related to gesture. If the force of limbs finds externalized articulation in graphics (as in parietal or Paleo art) or performance (as in dance), the gestural modulations of internal body parts result in the emergence of speech forms. The rhythms of gestural force are at the root of both lithic and alithic memories and articulations. But a hierarchic relation between the alithic speech form and lithic orthography is said to have regulated our reflections on communication systems in their relation to thought across history. A linearized relation between speech and the reductive graphical system called writing got established. In this reckoning, writing would only carry on and extend what otherwise would be lost in speech. As a mnemotechnology, writing is the preserver of speech and the quintessential emblem of the archives. Four thousand years of linear writing, Andre Leroi-Gourhan argued, have accustomed us to this bifurcation of graphical art from writing (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, pp. 192–202).

In his strategic project to displace this hierarchy, Jacques Derrida privileges the subordinated lithic figure–writing—and unravels the alithic speech form as a dominant metaphysical dogma underlying the entire (Western) episteme itself. The phonic substance, writes Derrida, "*presents itself* as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore non-empirical or noncontingent signifier—has necessarily dominated the history of the world … and has even produced the idea of the world…" (Derrida 1976, pp. 7–8, emphasis in original). Phoné for Derrida is being's self-relationship—"hearing and understanding oneself speak"; it is a sort of auto-affection (Derrida 1976, p. 7).

The essence of the phoné "would be immediately proximate to that which within 'thought' as logos relates to 'meaning….'" This, for Derrida, confirms absolute "proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the identity of meaning" (1976, pp. 10–12). In questioning the alleged primordialism of speech, its assured filiation with consciousness, its unexamined access to origin—Derrida's strategic project has been extraordinarily productive. Although it is of tactical and not of empirical significance or significant as a "historically" specific mode of articulation, the lithic figure of writing does not seem to escape an ethnocentric ruse here. For, it is precisely this "historical" and empirically specific system of lithic communication that was used to demarcate Europe from its others in an entire epoch called colonialism.

The oddity of this rather loaded figure (writing) in a radically subversive project (of Derrida's) does not, however, undermine the critical force of the project. For, in deploying this empirically and historically singular figure in his project, Derrida is only concerned with forging a filament, weaving a thread, configuring a versatile template of the most general significance. Thus writing in the narrow sense is a weave of differential system, a chain of variable filaments, spacing among a finite set of elements (letters).

The lithic system of writing is constituted by the rhythms of the weave, the forge and the template. These are rhythms without substance; but they bring forth or lend themselves to substance and system—"regulating the behavior of the amoeba or the annelid up to the passage beyond alphabetic writing to the orders of the logos of a certain *homo sapiens*, the possibility of the *grammé* structures the movement of its history according to rigorously original levels, types and rhythms." They are forces without essences; but they appear or lend themselves to engendering essences: "But one cannot think them without the most general concept of the *grammé*" (Derrida 1976, p. 84).

It is precisely in order to put to work this general force of difference or programme that Derrida draws on the figure of writing. The radical import of this strategy is to redress the historically repeated structures of violence—a violence that subordinates the work of hand to the work of face—of the graphic to the phonic. The most prominent casualty of this subordination, for Derrida, is the graphical system of alphabetic writing itself. The alphabet is the most illustrious instance of the violence of linearization. The graphic figure of the alphabet, in this linear dispensation is subordinated to the pre-supposed phonic essence. Hence the divergence between graphical art and writing, observed Leroi-Gourhan. Similarly alphabetic writing is reduced to little more than writing following speech, simply extending the regime of speech as it is: writing is "technics in the service of language" (Derrida 1976, p. 8). In subordinating the work of hand and the lithic mode of articulation of

memory, to the work of face and the alithic forms of expression, the linear schema has given birth to the archive and the practise of archivation of memories. The alphabetic writing is said to be the mark of European distinction.

2.5 In Gratitude

The deconstructive strategy—of conserving the empirical figure of writing but at the same time annulling it as derivative of speech, precisely in order to allude to the more originary programme of spacing—has initiated a radical questioning of inheritances, modes of communication and sedimented inquiries in the human sciences. But the *illustrative or exemplary* significance of the figure of writing has remained undisturbed in the project. Although Derrida was explicit on occasions in declaring the empirical division of speech and writing as irrelevant in his work,[13] although he would certainly regard speech very much like writing as a system of differences,[14] constituted by the force of spacing—nowhere in Derrida's work the differential system of *speech* is considered as a usable figure ("concept-metaphor") for articulating the force of difference.

From the very beginning of his work, Derrida has committed himself to recapture, within the history of life as the history of *grammé*, "the unity of gesture and speech, of body and language, of tool and thought, before the originality of the one and the other is articulated and without letting this profound unity give rise to confusionism…. To recover the access to this unity, to this other structure of unity, we must de-sediment 'four thousand years of linear writing'" (1976, pp. 85–86). *Yet, nowhere do these "original" communications of speech and gesture offer themselves for unraveling the Western episteme in Derrida's work.*

The privileged figure of literacy, the trope of scribal communication system—writing—remains the conserved (and annulled) element of Derrida's schema. Writing on drawings and art about the blind, sketching a scene of sibling rivalry, Derrida's confession about his investment in the figure of writing (against his brother's ability for painting) is unequivocal: "as for me, I will write, I will devote myself to the words that are calling me" (Derrida 1993, p. 37). These are of course, the words on the page—the traits of alphabetic writing. Quite often in his work, the general force of *grammé* (mark, trait, trace, etc.) lends itself to the alphabetic figure of writing. This can be seen in his emphasis on Plato's account of hypomnesic over

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[13] "I will disregard…", declared Derrida in a related context, "everything that consists in reducing the concept of text to that of written discourse, in forgetting that deconstruction is all the less confined to the prisonhouse of language because it *starts* by tackling logocentrism" (Derrida 1990, p. 91, emphasis in original).

[14] Derrida wrote elsewhere, emphasizing the singular traits of writing (in the empirical sense): the "structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified (and therefore from communication and its context) seems to me to make of every mark, *even if oral*, a grapheme in general… the nonpresent *remaining* of a differential mark cut off from its alleged 'production' or origin" (Derrida 1982, p. 318, first emphasis mine.)

mnesic or mnemic, the virtual mark (inscription on the soul) over the intangible force of memory: "The archive is hypomnesic" (Derrida 1995, p. 11).

At a crucial level, Derrida invests in the archive as the material "monumental apparatus" and opposes it to anamnesic memory as a metaphysical figure. Derrida advances the archive as the material exterior, which is destructive of either "memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience". He goes on to argue further that the archive irrupts the "originary and structural breakdown of the said memory". Derrida, thus, "consignates" only the hypomnesic apparatus (essentially writing in the narrow sense) as the proper material signifier. Speech and gesture—also material forces of the exterior—are not reckoned as worthy sign forces that can weave immemorial alternatives to the hypomnesic archive (Derrida 1995, p. 11).

Conversely, his devotion to Freud's "postcard" over the colossal investment of psychoanalysis in the figure of talk ("talking cure"), once again reiterates the status of exemplarity accorded to the empirical figure of writing. The "hand-written correspondence" has "played", states Derrida (1995, p. 17). in exploring the relation between the archive and psychoanalysis, a "major and exceptional role… at the center of the psychoanalytic archive".[15] The figure of alphabetic writing has served throughout Derrida's work as the most *exemplary* trope for illustrating the general force of *grammé*. Indeed, it is the letter, the written alphabetic letter that *alone* captures his "discreet graphic intervention", his strategic "neographic" substitute for writing: differ-*a*-nce.

Although differance, like writing, is the prior condition for the vulgar division between speech and writing, despite its constitutive play with time and space (difference and distance), and above all its potential for unravelling of sedimented master names and categories, differance "remains purely graphic"—*only* the vulgar sense of writing can provide us access to this "non-concept" in Derrida's work: "it (differance) is read, or it is written, but it cannot be *heard*…. *It cannot be apprehended in speech*". Only the "*written text*" (emphasis in original) will "keep watch over my discourse" (1982, p. 4, first emphasis mine).

Derrida too seemed to believe that the critical protocols of reading—rigour, differentiation and refinement "which our heritage continues to associate with the classical forms of discourse, and especially with written discourse, without images and on a paper support"—are possible only with writing (in the vulgar sense) (Derrida and Stiegler 2002, p. 243).

Although the materiality of speech forms, in Derrida's own account, are unthinkable without the work of *grammé*, neither the immemorial song cultures nor the intractable speech genres "before" writing (in the narrow sense), nor the vibrant performative forms of dance ("the unity of gesture and speech" referred to above), have any chance of the exemplary status that writing is accorded in Derrida's work. Could this be a symptomatic problem of inheritance (the "written Torah")—Derrida's heritage of patriarchal-monotheological culture whose origin is deeply chiselled in lithic orthography?

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[15] The figures of "inscription", "cut", "substrate", "impression", the "press", "house", and a whole lot of substitutes of writing (in the narrow sense) pervade this text.

Although Derrida's strategic reading of heritage is of profound importance even beyond the confines of his inheritance [his attempts to universalize the singular Judaic-Islamic figure of circumcision as "cut", "election" as the call (Derrida and Roudinesco 2004, pp. 92–95)], in his strategies of putting to work the inheritances, these resources do not have a place for mnemocultures—indeed of speech and gesture and their (ambivalent) articulations of the body.[16] They disregard the alithic *accents* of memory. If every communication (system) is the effect of spacing, repetition and difference and if it emerges only as a system of differences,

[16] Although Derrida wrote that he was always drawn to both the "general and universal figure of circumcision, of excision and in all the ethno-religious marking of the body," it is abundantly clear in his work that his reflective concerns (like those of most notable European thinkers) were circumscribed by monotheisms of Judeo-Christian-Islamic relays. Curiously, Derrida wrote, "if circumcision is abandoned (literal or figural circumcision, but everything played out around the letter, in Judaism as well as in Islam), one is on the road to an abandonment of phallocentricism. This would apply *a fortiori* to excision. This abandonment applies also to Christianity. Since these three religions are powerfully, although differently, phallocentric. In any case, phallocentricism, and circumcision link Islam and Judaism" (Derrida and Roudinesco 2004, pp. 194–195). If this is Derrida's way of exemplifying the universalizability of the singular (a conviction that he radically affirmed in his essay, "Faith and Knowledge" [1998, p. 18]), then one wonders how this monotheistic inheritance can become a synecdoche for a cultural/conceptual universal. For circumcision and excision are not necessarily the universal "ethno-religious markings of the body". One wonders why Derrida, who wove his texts with such extraordinary figural traces of the feminine (track, sign, furrow, hymen, invagination, etc.), who taught us so much about the originary violence of the irruption of life itself, should not consider the deepest mark, that deepest "wound", that brings forth every hominid body. This "wound"—linked to a bare fibrous thread, floating in the non-space, non ground, of the bodily fluid, yet absolutely essential for any being's coming forth—leaves the most literally indelible mark on every body. This thread—the umbilical cord that connects the fetus to the mother in the womb—ought to remind *every* body of the source, indeed "memory" or "history" and the untraceable origin of the body's emergence. Yet, the thread is the absolutely significant mark, a mark that no one excepting a woman (female) can inscribe. It is rather a mystery why this deepest mark *of* woman does not find a hospitable shelter in Derrida's figural weave.

It is not irrelevant to observe here that the figural-literal "thread" is the most central, inherited mark that one finds on the bodies of several communities in India. The figure of the thread has a more profound significance in the differentiated memories of *jati*s. One is made to remember constantly that the "thread", the "c(h)ord" as the "link" that, even after its literal severance, continues to remind one of its pull or touch. In the Telangana colloquial Telugu, this thread is called the "*pegu*" (literally, a piece of rag). The figure, it must be pointed out, refers to the mother's bodily experience. This figural mark appears in various ways (sacred thread, origin thread [*moltadu*], thread of well-being [*mangala sutra*], etc. The figure of thread refers also to an extraordinary reflective-poetic genre in Sanskrit tradition which was the most productive form for over a thousand years—the Sutra tradition.). Given such singular-plural, singular but with a cultural universal status that the figure of thread signifies, it is rather strange that this figure does not receive attention in Derrida's critique of phallocentrism. Reflecting from the specific monotheistic heritage, Derrida sees the possibility of abandoning phallocentrism in the abandonment of circumcision. Reflecting from the other possibilities that the figure of the thread suggests, one begins to see the necessity of rethinking the cultural universal status phallocentrism has been given in psychoanalytic and deconstructive work. It is here, once again learning from Derrida, that one must begin to explore the most singular, idiomatic articulations of the body and symbol in the heterogeneous inheritances of the past that still weave our existences and beings.

why does writing alone become the effective figure for grasping this non-transcendental force? Why can't differential systems of speech and gesture with their discreet "marks" offer effective acoustic resources for unraveling the transcendental, even if there were one? Speech and gesture remain unexplored as differential systems and as figures of/for thought in the work of deconstruction.[17]

Despite the enormous success of Derrida's strategies of reading, his critique of voice did not escape critical interrogation. The voice deconstructed by Derrida is a totally incongruous and reductive one, argued Sarah Kofman. Derrida essentially focused on a voice privileged by Husserl and "not the physical voice, a sonorous substance, but rather the phenomenological, transcendental voice that continues to be present to itself, in the absence of the world" (Kofman, quoted in Cavarero 2005, p. 220). What orients deconstructive labour—Derrida's philosophy of differance—is the theory of "the interminable deferral of a trace, understood as the movement of signs, whose concept basically coincides with writing. Writing, generally understood, is in fact the privileged realm of the movement of a trace that not by chance, acquires the name of *arche-ecriture* in Derrida's lexicon. Derrida's interest in the phoné, his discovery of the theme of the voice, emerges precisely from the prejudicial interest in a writing conceived as a texture of differential, as an open system of deferral, and deviations, which do not allow access to any presence" (Caterina Resta, quoted in Cavarero 2005, p. 220). Exemplification of (orthotic) writing undermines and ignores the acoustical grasp and vocalic articulations of memory.

In an extended critique of Derrida's anti-acoustic position, Adriana Cavarero argues that there is a "fundamental theoretical nucleus" alternative to Derrida's grammatological path which she finds in "vocalic uniqueness". Vocal emission is the sonorous manifestation of an embodied uniqueness. The "rhythmic matrix of pleasure, the delight of the acoustic sphere that follows the rhythms of the body, which makes the rhapsode's voice powerful" configures the vocalic uniqueness. Each voice is not only the vibration of a "throat of flesh" but "also something that comes certainly from a unique, unrepeatable person is a given that never becomes a philosophical point of reflection". When the grain of voice is ignored and when one becomes deaf to acoustic pleasure, indeed to the affective relation between the mouth and ear, one turns the voice into an abstract and *disembodied* category.

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[17] This appears to be the case even in critiques, which insist that deconstruction should attend to the specificity of different communication systems. For instance, in Bernard Stiegler's attempt to differentiate the digital conjuncture from the alphabetic context—it is once again the figure of literacy—*writing*—that by default enters the horizon as a frame of reference. In an interesting dialogue, in contrast to Stiegler's insistence on the alphabetic writing as the inaugural event of testimony ("*Isn't* this [alphabetic] *writing what makes historical work possible*?"), Derrida makes an unusual comment: "Yes, language, but I prefer to say speech or the voice here. Language in the singular event of a phrase, that is to say, the voice… the voice makes language an event. It takes us from the linguistic treasure-house to the event of the phrase." If speech or voice has this enunciative, event-making force or effectivity, one is impelled to ask, why is it this figure of speech/voice doesn't lend itself to unravel the heritage of the West in Derrida's work? (Derrida and Stiegler 2002, pp. 100–101).

Derrida "symptomatically misses the opportunity", argues Cavarero, to engage with "vocal ontology of uniqueness" (Cavarero 2005, pp. 84, 90–91, 235).[18] The anti-vocalic symptom can be traced back to Plato—despite the latter's professed antagonism towards writing.

2.6 Legacies

Apparently opposed in their positions, curiously Derrida's and Plato's *vision* of memory converges on the repression of the vocalic. Plato's apparent denunciation of writing does not mitigate his antagonism towards the experimenting bards who mix genres and combine hymns with lamentations, where choruses seduce their audiences with doleful paeans and Bacchaic revelry. Plato disparagingly dubs such experiments as "theatrocracy"—a mélange of heterogeneous voices, a celebration of sonic variants ("instead of an aristocracy ['where multitudes obeyed order'], an evil sort of theatrocracy has grown up"[19]). The literary form of dialogue that Plato deploys in his work is *apparently* a legacy of mnemocultural vocalic force. But

[18] Despite Derrida's extended use of acoustic terms ("Glas", "otobiography", "ear", "tympanum", etc.), it must be noted that all these are in the service of overturning the alleged privilege they enjoyed in association with speech in Western thought. For a more recent critique of Derrida's erroneous approximation of acoustic apparatus in his critique of speech see Veit Earlman, *Reason and Resonance* (2010).

[19] Plato (1952a, Book III, p. 676). For the Czech philosopher Jan Patocka, this theatrocracy forms the "thaumaturgical tradition" of pre-Christian orgiastic and demonic cults. Plato, according to Patocka, draws upon these traditions but overcomes them by incorporating them in his work of philosophy. From the orgiastic mystery Plato develops the idea of soul's immortality and grasps "subjectivizing interiorization" and this underlines the emergence of egological subjectivity, argues Patocka. But for Patocka the residue of the demoniac in Plato makes his philosophy a sort of thaumaturgy. Patocka argues that responsibility emerges in surpassing the demoniac mystery – ecstatic, orgiastic, pre-religious secrets. In other words, here evolution of ethical responsibility culminating in Christian religious thought is affirmed. If the demoniac survives the triumph of the egological-philosophical despite Christian evolution, it lurks as "a nucleus of irresponsibility or of absolute unconscious, something Patocka calls 'orgiastic irresponsibility'". This incorporated (by Plato) and repressed (by Christianity) "irresponsibility" resurfaces, writes Derrida in his commentary on Patocka, in (Platonic) philosophy, (Christian) religion, and even in (Enlightenment) secularization. But this return "corresponds to an abdication of responsibility", states Derrida. What is at stake in this entire discussion is in reality Christianity's (failed) maneuvering of the Pagan (mnemocultural) traditions. What this exegesis tells is a (Judaeo) Christian account of Pagan cultures of the ancient world. Christianity or monotheism continues to think about "human kind" from within the theo-conceptual framework which has evolved over two millennia. Patocka, points out Derrida from within the framework, never dissociates himself from Christian Europe. But for the Czech philosopher of responsibility, "Christianity remains thus far the greatest, unsurpassed but also un-thought-through *human* outreach that enabled human to struggle against decadence." The "decadence" is the "absolute unconscious" that lurks as the Pagan residue of the Pagan demonic mystery (cf. Derrida Derrida1995/2008, pp. 17–30, emphasis added). For a scintillating critique of this entire mono-theological framework's descriptions of Pagans, cf. Balagangadhara (1985, Chs. II and III, pp. 33–109).

this speech genre is already deeply regulated by the non-vocalic, visualizing literacy; Plato's dialogic speech is already deeply affected by logos—the meta-positional reflective technique: *Theoria*—envisioning insight in seeing behind or beyond—is essentially an occulocentric insight.

Plato's work is replete with this occulocentric figuration (the cave, Form, shadow, sunlight, etc.); the irresistibly talkative man Socrates represents two things at the same time: he who only speaks—that is, who has mastered speech, has absorbed and surpassed the bard—and his (that is, Socrates') rhapsodic and sophistic, seductive and hypnotic guises that beguile everyone. Yet, his logos-oriented dialogue is anti-melodic (in its thematization and disparagement of the bard). He demands seeing behind or beyond appearances; his visual dialectic is tone deaf.

Surely Socrates, more than anyone, is aware of the power of music and hence also the damage it can wreak upon a society; yet he is also meticulously sensitive to all the mnemocultural moments of his cultural habitat. That is, of all the interlocutors of his dialogue, Socrates is the one who most insistently recalls the days of festivals, the rituals to be performed, the locations of deities, local legends, hymns to be recited in specific contexts, debts to be repaid and above all render Homer any time with ease, and offer entrancing myths and (local) legends with superb sophistic fluency.

Yet, in the Socratic/Plato sphere logos overcomes the performative ritual and the efficacy of song-utterance; this can be seen in the paradigmatic case of Plato's *Ion*. In this short dialogue of Plato, as sketched earlier, Socrates—in a one-up-man scenario—ridicules Ion, and the rhapsode's inability to know the principles and nature of his art. For Socrates, Ion simply performs as a madman or an inspired person (in both cases what is at stake is conscious rationality) lacking the faculty of abstraction or theorization. He sings and performs without knowing the logic of what he does. In the place of the mode and being which persistently put each other to work (as in the mnemocultural act), autonomization of the mode or symbolization becomes the norm in Socratic discourse (unexamined life is not worth living).

The most classical forms of this autonomization can be witnessed in the agonal genres of reflection called philosophy and art (a "raging discord" between them sets in European history, says Nietzsche [quoted in Heidegger 1979, pp. 142–150]). The emergence and consolidation of this contestatory duo (philosophy/art) is actually a testimony to the interested undermining and overcoming of mnemocultures. Whether one chooses one of the agonistic domains (philosophy or art) or whether one tries to run them together (the concerted effort of German Romantics)—one still seems to disavow, as will be shown below, the mnemocultural mode of being—the radical performative (of) being.

The Socratic question—is there an ideal mode of being? (How should one live?)—has no use as long as it continues to strive for erecting an ideal. Western mode of saying *about* the ideal is voluminous. The volume seems to remain deaf to Socratic performative "question"—that of being, not of saying, discoursing *about* being.

No wonder, despite his voluminous talk ("chatter" as Nietzsche calls it)[20] about the question of being, goodness and a plethora of themes and questions, Socrates appears to be a vibrant performative figure as well. He never ignores or loses opportunity to render his rituals—before, during or after his talks/dialogues.[21] The talks/dialogues offer eloquent sayings that lend themselves to relentless theorization/discursivization. As if in the apprehension of such mis-cognitions of his talks Socrates intersperses his sayings with performatives. He is involved in a mode of being that remains incommensurate with the volume of his talks. He never theorizes this performative side of his being. On the contrary he questions the idle philosophers who offer logical explanations about what he affirms in practice.[22]

Socrates does seem to carry mnemocultural intimations. His major contention, his fundamental thesis—if one can put it this way—about the essential task of philosophy is not offering rational discourses as such but effective remembering—the essential anamnesic act. One can configure this Socratic mode of being as exemplifying, in the idiom of Sanskrit reflective traditions, the position of a *smarta* (the recaller, the performative rememberer) rather than that of a *karta* (the sovereign agent in full control of his action) (Sarma 2010, p. 9). As is said in the Sanskrit (Upanishadic) tradition, *shastram hi jnapakam na karakam* (discourse is only for remembrance, after the event, and it cannot cause) (*Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2:1), the "dialectic" in the case of Socrates is to strengthen remembrance, and recall.

Yet it must be pointed out, as was shown earlier, that Socrates' mode of utterance—although performative—persistently purges or cleanses itself of the song-cultural, acoustic melodic resonances of the tradition. As is well known, Plato/Socrates' agonistic other was none other than the blind bard Homer. Thus, although Socrates draws on speech form of dialogue, it is systematically distanced from the acoustic sphere of the song. His dialogue-dialectic is anaesthetized from the heritage of Aoide (the muse of song); Socratic speech genre is logos-centred. It has feverishly sought to distance itself from *muthos* as well as epos.

The enigma of Plato's work is that it finally frames this dialectic-dialogic and performative life of Socrates with the most ironic turn in the *Phaedo*. Socrates' recurrent dream in prison disturbs him. The man who led his entire life weaning himself away from the musical-melodic cultural heritage, by consolidating

[20] For Nietzsche, Socrates was a "misfortune" that befell Greek culture. This culture, in his view, had "marvelous philosophers" preceding Socrates and they were replaced by the "combative and garrulous hordes of the Socratic schools". Nietzsche differentiates the non-literacy of these pre-Socratics from Socrates' avoidance of writing. Unlike the latter, "These early Greeks did not *chatter* and *revile* so much; neither did they *write* so much". Socratic garrulity, writes Sarah Kofman commenting on Nietzsche, was a "way of exercising mastery over others; one can limit oneself to questioning others without communicating anything to them" (Kofman 1998, pp. 222–224, emphasis in original).

[21] These ritual performances can be seen in the *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and *Phaedo*, among others.

[22] In the *Phaedrus*, talking about skeptical people who discount age old accounts of tradition by reducing "them one after another to the rules of probability," through rational explanation, Socrates clearly says: "Now I have no leisure for such enquiries." For, "I must first know myself", he adds quoting the "Delphian inscription" (Plato 1952c, p. 116).

a paradigm of thought called philosophy (or dialectics), is (almost at the end of his life) driven to practise music. The logos-centred life is impelled to reflect on the repressed *muthos/aoide/mousike*. In all these performative modes of being, Socrates comes across as the bardic master of truth and a diviner, as an exemplary figure from the culture of wisdom. But on closer reading one notices that Socrates in fact musters and masters all these mnemocultural forces to bracket them, to surpass them; he subordinates these performative resources to the logos-oriented, theorizing drive of the dialectic. With all such power of the heritage, Socrates moves away from being the guardian of mnemoculture to playing the pioneer of the philosophical vocation—a thaumaturge with a variation. He affirms the epistemic turn even as he appears to exemplify the culture of memory. Despite the disruptive mnemocultural intimations, the structure of the *Phaedo* carries on in the typical Socratic dialogue-genre.

For Plato's Socrates, the Homeric culture of memory, which is indebted to acoustic sphere, is a "paralysis of thought". "To liquidate Homer means", writes Cavarero, "for Plato, to neutralize at once the world of the tale and the seductive, bodily, and the enchanting effect of the phoné" (2005, pp. 80–81). Though Socrates knows the world of epos, of bardic recitations, he devotes himself to capture the essences in terms of abstractions (the essence or nature of art) and into a coherent system: "Thus are born *episteme* founded on *theoria*"—knowledge as visualized abstractions. "The acoustic and videocentric", argues Cavarero, which marks "Platonic thought, and hence of Western philosophy, is therefore confirmed by studies that investigate the difference between oral and literate cultures" (Cavarero 2005, p. 81).

Perhaps Socrates himself is responsible for this lithic rendering of his intimations; or, at least Plato renders him this way. His talks dominate; the significance of Socrates is reduced to his discursive reasoning. He is the dawn of rationality or at least advanced the dawn to the brightness of daylight. Yet, the complexity of Plato's task is two-fold. He criticizes epic poetry but criticizes writing too. The critique has something to do with Plato's aversion towards the body. Writing forges speech into a visible, dead body—a carcass of letters, whereas epic poetry incites revelling and the intoxicated pleasures of the body. Plato condemns both. Therefore in his critique of writing it is the speech devoid of revelry and the irrational (or the inspirational rhapsodic) that he makes Socrates utter—and not the Homeric (or Orphic) sonorous rhythms: "In the historical transition from orality to writing, Plato takes the side of an orality that is stripped of its originary connotations and already depends on the antivocal effects of writing" (Cavarero 2005, p. 82).

Although Derrida unravels the heliocentric tropes in Plato's work, he largely focuses his attention on Plato's phonocentrism, his alleged fixation on speech over writing, his disparagement of writing; the message of the *Phaedrus*, argues Derrida, is that writing for Plato is "at once mnemotechnique and the power of writing" (1976, p. 24). In overturning Platonism, Derrida moves with writing as the discarded, denigrated material inscription preceding and constituting all colloquial communicational forms. In contrast to this constitutive material force, speech of Plato's oeuvre gets highlighted as a target of critique, whereas what this

anti-bardic, devocalized speech achieves is not antagonistic to Derrida's essentially visual-graphic (i.e., non-vocalic) figure of writing. For what stands out as Plato's Socrates' discovery is the occulocentric theoria—its drive, weaning itself away from the "inspirational" sonoric mode of embodied knowledge, techné (episteme) drawn on rational dialectic.

Although Derrida is critical of an alleged transcendental relation between the phonic (sound/voice) and the metaphysical presence, he too (like Plato) invests in an ultimately visual, graphic, inscriptive figure (writing) in his critique of the heritage. Further, although this figural marking of writing is said to be irreducible to the colloquial, empirical sense of writing and the other (general) force of writing is said to be anterior to all colloquial systems of communication, nowhere does Derrida take recourse to colloquial forms of vocalic, melodic, aural communicational practices to put to work the general force of writing. All the instantiations of the general are always deployed by means of the *colloquial* figure of writing or graphical forms. In other words, despite his apparent critique of Plato and departure from Platonism, Derrida's work converges on and extends the visual/graphic forms of reflection affirmed by Socrates-Plato in their overcoming of mnemocultures.

Contrary to appearances, the most crucial thematic that brings together Plato and Derrida is the question of the body. It is well known, as pointed out earlier, that Plato treated the body as contingent and dispensable; his dialogue form and his belated urge to usher in musical praxis are all in inverse relation to the body: they treat the body as accidental. In privileging the disembodied voice as the source of the soul's travel and transcendence, and in discarding writing as carcass, Plato became the target of Derrida's pointed critique. In his unravelling of Plato, Derrida emphasizes the materiality of the lithic supplement (writing) and counters Plato's autonomous soul-memory (against the body) as it manifests in the latter's work in binaries: "being versus becoming, the soul versus the body, intelligible thought in the immortal soul versus the sensible thought of the mortal body, in short logos versus techné" (Derrida 1976, p. 72).

In this critique Derrida champions the mnemotechnique that creates surrogate memory systems—and as a result, the absolute material entity of the biocultural formation called the body barely receives attention. Curiously, in Derrida's own immense attention to writing as a mnemotechnique, as a system of differences that exists beyond and without the determined agency, the irreducible material entity called the body loses its space for the prosthetic or surrogate body. That is, in overturning and displacing the traditional hierarchy between the soul and the body, Derrida does not attend to the materiality of the body as such but concentrates on the externalized marks, hypomnesic material signifiers and the objectified and evidentiary appurtenances of symbolization. The body of mnemotechniques (writing, graphics, lines, mythograms, hypomnesic representations) takes over the place of the biological formations that are deeply involved in symbolization. This silent displacement of the body has barely received attention in Derrida's work. On the contrary, his persistent attention to "writing" as a mnemotechnique has furthered the ascendancy of the prosthetic—especially in the work of Bernard Stiegler, whose work has barely any space for mnemocultural articulations.

2.7 Prosthetic Sublimations

Plato inaugurated a formidable paradigm for addressing the question of memory. While implicitly acknowledging the ineluctable fact that memory can be accessed only by means of its exteriorization, Plato *appears* to favour alithic modes over lithic ones in articulating memory. The alithic means are those of speech and gesture and Plato called these anamnesic modes of remembering; whereas the lithic ones externalize memory by means of inscription on a substrate, accessed by means of chiselled or carved letters. Plato called the latter hypomnesic memory (to be sure Plato refers to the latter more as writing on the soul—metaphoric writing and not the material inscription). Plato's preference for the former sets up an opposition between anamnesic and hypomnesic modes of externalizing memory.

Drawing on Plato's morphology of memory, Bernard Stiegler extends the lithic heritage of memory to early hominid evolution (in tool making). Only externally retained memory can form heritages; but Plato sensed that bequeathing memorization only to lithic or hypomnesic technologies is dangerous to memory itself. Stiegler acutely senses this in our contemporary industrial production of memory. He notices that there is an aggravation of the dissociation between hypomnesic and anamnesic modes of memorization in our contemporary world. In such situations who ever has control over hypomnesic apparatuses controls and commands memories in the world, Stiegler argues: "But the new technological forms of knowledge, objectified in equipment and apparatus, conversely engender a loss of knowledge at the very moment one begins speaking of 'knowledge societies', 'knowledge industries', and what has come to be known as 'cognitive' or cultural capitalism". Hyperindustrialization of memory commands and controls the behaviour of consumers and threatens modes of existence, contends Stiegler.

Following Derrida's critique of Plato, Stiegler sees the relation between the two modes of externalizing memory not as hierarchical (privileged anamnesis and denigrated hypomnesis) but as mutually co-constitutive. Such a conception affirms a supplemental relation between the two modes of articulating memories. For Stiegler the decisive political question today is: how to articulate anamnesic and hypomnesic memories. In his historicization of this relationship Stiegler contends that the mnemotechnique of writing provided the possibility of individual response to archivations of memory, whereas industrial productions of memory by means of audiovisual technological systems increasingly deprive the receiver of any possibility of active participation in the productions. The distance between producer and the receiver gets widened.

But the currently ascendant networked technological systems, which are not under the control of any single individual or group, require active participation from the receiving ends, argues Stiegler. Here, receivers can also be potential senders. Such co-productions of memory can contribute to the "sustainable hypomnesic milieus". The internet involves participatory technologies—and turns away from the producer/consumer opposition, argues Stiegler: "The Internet age is an age of hypomnesis constituting itself as an *associated* technical milieu." Given the limits

to genetic evolution of human species, its open-ended evolution can become possible only by non-genetic or non-biological means, argues Stiegler. Such evolution by other means is what he terms epigenetic or epiphylogenetic advancement, or through externally retained heritages (Stiegler 2010, pp. 64–87).

Stiegler's account of memory makes a compelling reading. Yet, what emerges most strikingly in this account is that Stiegler, by default as it were, privileges (like Derrida) the mnemotechniques and in his entire account the space for immemorial forms of communication such as speech and gesture are conspicuous by their absence. Hypomnesis is essentially and always determined by or represented only by inscriptional marks; externalization is identified only by means of grammaticization and spatialization—that is, by written means; it is thus to make a spatial object. For grammaticization, points out Stiegler, is the "process whereby the currents and continuities shaping our lives becomes discrete elements". He explains this by contrasting writing with speech. Writing, contends Stiegler, breaks into discrete elements "the flux of speech". Writing or spatializing of the mark, Stiegler argues, is "transforming the *temporal flow* of a speech … into a *textual space*, a de-temporalised form of speech". It is, in other words, quoting Walter Ong, Stiegler states, "the reduction of a dynamic sound to quiescent space" (Stiegler 2012). But one wonders why is speech characterized as such a chaotic flux? Is discretization contingent upon writing? Can "grammar" be reduced to literate or linguistic training?[23]

[23] Curiously and ironically, despite her provocative critique of Derrida, Cavarero too functions from within the confines of literate heritage: "the culture of primary orality lacks … the elements that allow the voice to be thought of as an acoustic material governed by the system of signification. A discipline like linguistics – which Plato and Aristotle inaugurate … presupposes writing". Whereas minute and precise reflections on the sonority and accent, modulation and intonation, utterance and recitation are for millennia transmitted in preliterate Sanskrit traditions of *shiksha* ("phonetics"). The *pratisakhya*s (schools of Vedic utterance) offer extended reflective accounts of vocalic expression. Unaware of such traditions, Cavarero goes on to say: "In fact, all scientific knowledge presupposes writing. Linguistics, however, has the direct aim of swallowing the phoné within the space of the sign." This certainly may be true in the context of European heritage, but this is not necessarily a cultural universal. Frits Staal devoted a significant part of his life to drive home this point – that the "science" of reflecting on language (as utterance) – *vyakarana* ("grammar") – existed long before lithic technologies of literacy developed. Also cf., for a valuable account on this tradition, *Critical Studies in the Phonetic Observations of Indian Grammarians* by Siddheswar Varma (1961). An important thinker, who too functions from within the European heritage but who is sensitive to the independence of metalevel reflections on language from literacy, has this to write: "One need only, in this respect, mention the work of Panini who around the 5th century BC, at an epoch in which writing was not yet a common tool for the notation of spoken language and in a fundamentally phonocentric tradition (that is of the Veda), developed a meta-linguistic analysis of Sanskrit so perfect that today it still constitutes the most commonly used practical manual for learning this language…. Panini termed [this] *vyākarana*, a word that means at once manifestation and distinction, that is to say, analysis that renders visible and thus makes known the morphology and the syntax of spoken language" (Dastur 2000, pp. 17–18, 94–95). Discretization of "the flux of speech" here has little to do with mnemotechniques.

Even if one goes with the axiom that no interiority precedes exteriorization ("there is no memory that is not hypomnesic" [Hansen 2010, p. 66]—the question that needs address is: why is that the lithic mnemotechniques are the only paradigmatic instances of exteriorization? Why privilege mnemotechniques to configure hypomnesis? Why aren't supplemental resources of speech and gesture filiated to (but alienated from) the body are seen as equally significant hypomnesic forms proliferating in discretized biocultural formations across millennia among mnemocultures? Why is it that even radical critical engagement with received heritages in European tradition (such as Derrida's and Stiegler's) does not inquire into the question of techné or technics in the context of alithic modes of living on?

What is striking in Stiegler's (and Derrida's) narrativization of memory is that the emphasis here falls more on memory per se as it is retained by the material supplement; that is to say, Stiegler's concern is essentially with the materially exteriorized memory as an object. Consequently, the biologically discrete individuals and individuated *jati*s or "communities" who nurture and exteriorize memory through embodied and enacted modes of being find no place in this theorization of memory. In other words, Stiegler's inquiry into techné or technics has little to say about articulations of embodied memory among alithic mnemocultures. If Derrida looked for "lines" and marks on the *kalabash*es of Brazilian Nambikwaras, Stiegler focuses his attention on the flints, bifaces and the later Paleolithic markers or petrograms and glyphs of memory ("Flint is the first reflective memory, the first mirror") (Stiegler 1998, p. 142, Chap. 3). But the critical fact that along with embodied markers of tattooing, jewelry and costume, these mnemocultures sustain their memories essentially through enacted musical-verbal and visual forms and through unarchived, non-objectified and "ephemeral" modes of living them barely receives attention from these thinkers. By focusing entirely on archivable objectivity (in non-organic material forms), these thinkers barely provide any space to reflect on life's embodied systems of retentions. These radical thinkers, in line with the European heritage, devote their work to theorize prosthetic and surrogate systems and thus subsume the entirety of (hominid) life to archive fevers.

Mnemocultural retentional practices, this work contends, remain indifferent to surrogate storage systems and articulate their biocultural existences differently from those of the lithic heritages. In his exclusive attention to the epigenetic "spiritual struggle" (living on by means other than biological living), Stiegler silently removes the body from the arena: The "spiritual struggle is a struggle that takes place in a domain other than the living." The irony of this account is that it characteristically (Platonically) reduces "the living" to either the animal or biological. That is, once the "spiritual" (for Plato this is the realm of the intelligible) domain emerges and distinguishes the human, the latter is distanced from the immemorial material phenomenal body—another colossal palimpsest of lively memories. The question that barely gets addressed here is: are the mnemotechnological apparatuses the final destination of all epiphylogenetic receptions and endowments? Why can't the question of technicity as desire and knowledge be addressed from outside this one single trajectory which manifests in the form of mnemotechnological apparatuses?

Does the alithic mnemocultural indifference towards surrogate systems of exteriorized memory articulate a different relation of desire and technicity? These are the kind of questions that impelled me to undertake this work.

Despite the privilege and power it is accorded, the figure of literacy—orthotic writing—has had a very limited duration and reaches in the human history. However, the origins of gesture and speech remain immemorial and their spread continues to be planetary. If the non-West is demarcated as devoid of alphabetic writing, the European West could be reckoned as bereft of gesture and speech—though such oppositionalism cannot escape deconstructive critique. The lithic text of the "alphabetic body" displaced, if not silenced, the alithic rhythms of mnemocultures in the West. Alphabetic writing of speech substantially mutes the sonority of speech, contends Cavarero (2005, pp. 82–83).

The word and inscription are sacred entities themselves in the Abrahamic traditions and they demand exclusive attention; they gain an autonomous status with regard to the body that experiences them. The most cherished and covetable task in the context of such autonomous (from the body) prosthetic forms of signification is the deciphering and interpretation of what are considered to be the enigmatic, cryptic instantiations of the sacred.

The word, in the form of inscription—lithic materialization—can be postulated as a surrogate, prosthetic object in space and time. Space and time as referential coordinates or originary conditions, gain genetic significance. A sovereign creation, the word turned into lithic inscription, brings forth the imperative of representation of the object out there. Representation of the object is conditioned on the faith or belief concerning the encrypted truth of the object—truth that requires unveiling, disclosing. Life in such lithic tradition is inextricably conditioned by its relation to the object—word/inscription in a space that captures time.[24] Only such a tradition can generate object-oriented/objectifying discourses such as history (time), anthropology (space), science (object). Knowledge is the objectual representation aimed at revealing or proposing truth of the object by means of inscription. Lithic traditions are haunted by epistemophilia. The civilization of the Book, points out Derrida in his retrieval of writing, offers the "encyclopedic protection of theology and of logocentrism against the disruption of writing, against its aphoristic energy, and … against differance in general" (Derrida 1976, p. 18).

While countersigning his (Abrahamic) heritage profoundly, Derrida emphasized the praxial intimations of his work; he committed himself to practicing thinking differently. Although such thinking cannot be reduced to determined codes of communication (which is Derrida's lesson), Derrida substantially concerned himself with mnemotechnological domains of inscription. His ear turned away from mnemocultural sonic-melodic differance; surrogate, prosthetic bodies alone captured his attention and moved him away from the embodied and enacted

[24] Curtius (1953, pp. 302–347) has extensively documented the centrality of the symbol of script in European heritage which derives from the theological sense that the universe is the colossal script ("natural writing") of the god. Derrida unravels the legacy of this theological metaphor in his work (1976, pp. 12–18).

praxial modes of being. Therefore, there was a need to take Derrida elsewhere and disperse him across mnemocultures.

Departing from the common root of anamnesic reflective performative mode of living on, the Greek antiquity (at least from Plato onwards) seems to have oriented itself towards the objectifying forms of knowledge making. Once the Greek intellectual traditions inaugurated the epistemic turn, discursive, lithic, scribal, archival, architectural forms of consolidating the symbol were pursued systematically in the European heritage. This epistemic turn remained the most powerful regulative and productive force in European discursive productions. Consequently, what might be figured as the most originary of questions concerning the relation between the body and symbol remains un-addressed, outside the paradigmatic episteme advanced in Greek-Jew-Christian history of alphabetic-archival literacy. Eventually, even if there were inquires into the question—they are largely guided by the paradigmatic resolution—which is oriented towards objectifying, positive knowledges. History, anthropology guided by the epistemic turn of knowledge production, consolidated a mnemotechnological culture that can convert every singular mnemoculture into an object of knowledge.

The ascendancy of lithic knowledges displaced or discarded the embodied and enacted modes of learning and being; as surrogate or prosthetic apparatuses (document, archive and library) became prominent, the body and its learned modes of going about in the world became redundant or useless. Such prosthetic modes of knowledge production is cherished as a European distinction and affirmed as European difference from, say, the (alleged) Oriental pursuit of divinity (Vernant 1982, pp. 10–11; Vernant 2006b).

God is said to have spoken to Moses before he bequeathed him the lithic tablets. But there was no clue to the passion of god's tongue, the rhythm of his speech, the pitch, the grain of his voice, the accent of his breath and the emphasis of what is announced; it's no more a part of cultural memory. In other words, the syntax of the lithic displaced the *prosody* of utterance and the prosody that enacts the rhythms of sound and movement in embodied forms. But to the author(s) of the alphabetic culture the question of god's passion and affect, the accents of his speech, have no sense "at least in so far as these traditions [of Judaeo-Christian religion] have no resources for establishing differences that could be humanly registered between the ways God spoke and wrote words" (Rotman 2002, p. 99). Hence the necessity of engaging with the lithic and alithic memories, the singularity of their mnemotechniques, or technics in general, and indeed the necessity of responding to the call or conflict of these demarcated heritages. If the lithic writing consolidated monotheism, discursive philosophy, calculative reason, and codified law—the cherished resources of European colonialism and difference—the destinies of alithic mnemocultural traditions of the world must be reconstellated beyond their enframing in the imperial traditions and their lithic codes. The call of mnemocultural inheritances invites other responses, intimates other responsibilities and offers other figures of/for reflective practice.

Articulations of memory differ in different ways. Conceptions of anamnesis and hypomnesis are seen to be different but both these are markedly different from

mnemocultural compositions and dispersals of memory. The thematics of repetition, freedom, memory, desire, the body and alterity in Indic mnemocultures suggest the possibility of a different articulation of the body and symbol than the ones unravelled in/as the monologotheism of the West by Derrida.

When mnemocultural speech and gestural acts name and demarcate elements and entities, the very modes of utterance and the diverse forms of address that disperse from these cultures of memory require attention. Their archivability and representability cannot be reduced; but the fact that the mnemocultural traditions made such possibilities of reproducibility entirely contingent upon the acts/articulations of the body marks the singular difference of mnemocultures. The centrality of the body here must not be measured in terms of the content of these compositions of image, music, text—but in the very performativity of the body-symbol in each instance. Mnemocultures circulate and proliferate through performative reiterations and not by way of archival accumulations and representations. The next chapter thematizes the enigma of enduring memories of the body in Indian (Sanskrit and other) cultural inheritances.

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Chapter 3
Futures of the Past: Mnemocultures and the Question of Inheritance

Abstract In contrast to the European preference for archivally retained memories, this chapter demonstrates how Sanskrit traditions sustained and augmented their inheritances through embodied and performative memories. While examining their cultivated indifference toward literacy, the chapter emphasizes the absence of any significant impact of literacy on Sanskrit traditions for millennia. Contemporary debates regarding the memory and literacy in the Indian context are critically examined in this chapter.

Keywords Mnemocultures · Performative · Sanskrit · Indology · Body

> Thought will be transformed only through thought that has the same origin and determination.
>
> Heidegger (1976, p. 62)

Memories can come forth as residual sonic marks or acoustic remainders of interminable events. They are the equivocal traces of the unavailable. Although memories are non-phenomenal in their force, they emerge cocooned from the pores of the material biological body. As marks and traces, memories affect the body they inhabit. When memories are articulated, the bodies that give them form in turn affect them; they mutually constitute each other.

3.1 Pura-api-navam

Memory in Indic or Sanskrit and other mnemocultures, unlike in Plato, is neither figured as a malleable plastic substance on which anything can be inscribed; nor is it personified by any archon (mnemon). Nor does memory here have a presiding deity (out there externally) like Mnemosyne—the mother of all Muses. In effect, memory does not seem to sublimate in any narrative line here as is the case with the archaic Greek bard-poets (Homer, Hesiod and Pindar). There is no mythology

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of memory to be valorized as in Plato's *Phaedrus* or *Theatetus* in the Sanskrit tradition. Nor does one find in Indic traditions any "*graeculi*" (little Greeks)—a sort of learned slaves who would memorize and aid their Roman elite masters with information on social and political events (Danziger 2008, p. 1).[1] One could argue that myths, *purana*s, *itihasa* (occurred events), etc., are the irrepressible mnemocultural detours of the non-narrative textual traditions of Sanskrit (Vedic) cultural formation. For the ancient Sanskrit (Vedic) compositions were decisively alithic and non-narrative in their emergence and circulation (we shall return to this theme at several places in this work).

Neither entropic nor traumatic, memory in Indian (Sanskrit) traditions never attracted a meta-level theoretical attention. Also, in the most vibrant reflective (if polemical) tradition (of the *darshana*s [reflective positions]) memory is not accorded any epistemological status in India: "Memory was excluded from the scope of true cognition (*prama* [valid knowledge])…. No Indian philosopher recognized memory as a *pramana* [means of cognition]" (Mohanty 1992, pp. 21, 241).[2] On the contrary, even to this day, memory in myriad ways articulates modes of being or going about in the world on the Indian subcontinent. What needs to be noticed here is that memory per se means nothing. Unlike in the Greek antiquity, memory as such, memory as a substance or attribute of the soul has no epistemic status in Indian traditions; on the contrary, it is the *articulations* of memory that receive all the attention. The most powerful material and tangible modes of articulating memory are speech and gesture in our context. Therefore it is not memory (as such) but *shabda* (sonic resonance) that is accorded epistemic status among the *darshana*s. Memory thus emerges as a praxial force—something that is nurtured in the body of the being, brought forth in practices—that textures lives in the Indian context over millennia.

For nearly two millennia before the Common Era, the entire reflective and creative cultural articulation in Indic formations came forth in mnemocultural forms. By the time of the Upanishads (if not earlier), the mnemocultural mode gets clearly articulated. Let's recall Yajnavalkya's advice to Maithreyi on the eve of his decision to lead a forest life, when she inquires whether there is anything else that gives happiness beyond the one that wealth gives. Of course there is, Yajnavalkya affirms. It is the learning to learn the intimations of *para* (the other in the body) in our existence, he points out. How does one achieve that, Maithreyi asks. It is here

[1] For Danziger, memory is entirely a psychological category that shapes and is shaped by the individual and his socio-cultural settings. As will become clear later, memory is not a psychological category in Indic traditions. As in the case of many other categories (such as ethics, history, life) memory does not get theorized or conceptualized in Indian traditions. In contrast to Indian cultures of memory, mnemonics, in the West, was not believed to be accurate in recollections. It fell into disuse, later revived in the Middle Ages and "finally [was] abandoned for good in the Renaissance" (Scharfe 2002, p. 242).

[2] Curiously, Mohanty reckons memory per se—or what Husserl calls "primary memory"—and as such tries to argue for epistemic status for memory. In other words, as in Husserl's case, here too memory is dissociated from its acoustic articulations, its relation to *shabda* in Indian context (Mohanty 1992, pp. 241–242).

that the sage hints at the mnemocultural mode of being. It is through *shravana/manana/nidhidhyasa* (through attentive listening, focused recollection and meditative concentration) that one can hope to learn to learn the intimations of *para* in existence and thus attain happiness (*ananda*), says the sage (*Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad*, Part II Chap. IV, 1989, pp. 70–77).[3]

The Indian poet A. K. Ramanujan recounts an experience of meeting a pandit in Pune who could recite the RgVeda in its entirety, even backwards; he could reproduce it skipping alternative lines; provide concordance for any word or phrase from the composition. This stunning performative of memory indicates a non-scribal learning. This memory culture has baffled generations of Indologists.[4] Not that the pandits were entirely unaware of writing. But the circulation and sustenance of the Veda (and most of the Sanskrit compositional tradition) is based on remembrance, recapitulation and recitation (*jnapaka, smarana*, and *dharana*) of what is heard—*shruti* (Ramanujan 2005, pp. 84–85).

The Indologist Ashok Aklujkar recounts the story of a pandit who lived in Nagpur at the turn of the 19th century. The pandit was an expert in Panini's *vyakarana* ("grammar"). When someone asked him a question relating to Panini, he would

> … almost always simply point to the books and handwritten copies stacked on wooden planks fixed to the walls of his *agnihotra* area and advice the inquirer to take down a particular volume and look up a particular part or page for the answer he [the inquirer] was seeking. He would not feel the need to consult the volumes before formulating his answer.

Although this pandit claimed knowledge of only Panini, he wrote literary commentaries "without opening any book and by citing several authorities outside the grammatical literature" (Aklujkar 2001a, p. 44. fn 6). Madhav Deshpande provides a matching experience about his teacher who recited the entire *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini every day on his way to the Ganga in Kashi (Deshpande 2010, pp. 96–97).[5] A "civilization" without literacy seemed utterly incredible to 18th and 19th century Europeans. Mnemocultural India posed a cognitive challenge to Europe.

Memories do not abide by the logic of the line. They recur radially and parallely. Their recurrence, like the recitation of a mnemotext, does not point to an event or an agent or a determined location in the past, but the repetition, recurrence even as it alludes to an anterior moment of existence has a performative status.

[3] One is tempted here to recall the three (older) Muses of archaic Greece who inspired the maters of truth. Melete (practice, concentration), Mneme (memory) and Aoide (song) echo the Upanishadic *Shravana/manana/dharana* (recitation) modes of reflection and articulation. Cf. Detienne (1999, pp. 40–41).

[4] The reciters of the Veda have preserved their ancestors' compositions "in immaculate purity… [over] three millennia … without the aid of writing or other mechanical devices" (Scharfe 2002, p. 240).

[5] The entire section on Veda-Vedanga and Avesta between Orality and Writing is of relevance to the mnemocultural account being developed here.

Indeed the mnemotext, as will be shown more elaborately later, is performed at its every single emergence through speech and gesture, in the alithic mode.

The memory-traces and the reiterated learning that the Sanskrit tradition represents created a kind of "textual" (from *textere*—weaving) tradition; this tradition is replete with citations, repetitions, condensations and elaborations of what others have said; unravelling, supplementing and recomposing the heard and the inexhaustible—and above all interminably responding to and rendering one's duty (*vidhi*) for what is received. It looks as if every composition is predominantly a recapitulation and recitation (*smarana/dharana*) of the inherited. In every instance, therefore the singularities of performance constitute the life and drift of a mnemotext. The effectiveness and significance of the mnemotext is contingent upon each of its performative receptions. Similarly, singularities of each existence/each life depend on its reception of and response to the ineffable impressions of memory that form such an existence/life. Memories can be said to emerge from a force-field of traces—traces that haunt the finite body interminably but discontinually and transgenerationally. Memory is not any masterable experience of a determined past or a recoverable event or identity of a past present.[6]

3.2 Reflective Excavations

For over three millennia, the Sanskrit language provided sources of reflection and ritual in the Indian subcontinent. The Sanskrit heritage has left an indelible mark on all the major Indian languages. Although the Indian languages ("vernaculars") either emerged or consolidated themselves in the second millennium, they have no reflective traditions independent of Sanskrit (the Prakrit heritage cannot be easily opposed to the Sanskrit one). The Sanskrit heritage retained its hegemony in creative and reflective realms in precolonial India.

Traditionally, pandits are the makers and movers of the Sanskrit heritage. The word *pandita* derives from the feminine noun *panda* which connotes "waking up, realization, intellect and intelligence". The tradition of associating pandit with learning and scholarship goes back to pre-Paninian (before 500 BC) period (Aklujkar 2001b, pp. 17–19). Although pandits are largely from the Brahmin community, the word is also used to refer to Buddhist, Jain and (occasionally) Muslim savants. The Sanskrit tradition is synonymous with the Brahman tradition (Ingaals 1959, pp. 3–9). Although the word refers to a specific *jati* or community, originally it has had a more general significance: "[B]rahman refers originally to a 'formulation' (*Formuleirung*), the capturing in words of a significant and non-self-evident truth" (Jamison and Witzel 1992, p. 66). These form-giving abilities are believed to endow the "Brahman" the power to perform in the cosmic realm as well.

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6 In Aristotle's privileging of "remembrance" over memory, one notices this investment in retrieval of a past present. Cf. Krell (1990, pp. 4–5).

The "formulations" in the RgVeda, the oldest available verbal corpus, are considered in the Brahmin tradition as the "compilations" (*samhita*s) of such significant and "non-objective" truths. In a way the Sanskrit tradition is little more than a relentless and unending effort to articulate the "truths" of these compilations. The extant verbal corpus is incomplete, fragmentary and it contains only remnants. The tradition is acutely aware of this incompleteness, the fact of the "lost Veda".

The fragment and the incomplete have become the irreducible sources of reflection, speculation and performance in the tradition. But nowhere in the tradition, even to this day, these millennial reflective and performative energies are devoted to an archaeological venture to search for the lost, to fulfil the incomplete. The unavailable has become the interminable condition of ritual and thought in the tradition. Consequently, the Sanskrit heritage is an immeasurable palimpsest of heteronymic tissues spacing themselves across the diversity of Indian languages and cultural soils and in the process undergoing inevitable trans-formations. It is a heritage with neither a central archive nor a jussive custodian of the heritage. The pandit is not an archon guarding excavations. The dehiscence of this heritage remains immeasurable.

For millennia the survival of the Sanskrit heritage depended on a non-tangible and non-filial pedagogical bond between the teacher and the pupil. What is central to the survival of the heritage is the *shiksha*—the discipline of rigorous acoustic learning. It is a learning gained through intimacy—from the face of the teacher (*gurumukhatah*). Learning emerges from a bond formed by the teacher on one side and the taught on the other—face-to-face. If the linking cord is "knowledge"—then the imparting is achieved through verbal exegeses (*pravachana*). This pedagogical bonding between the *acharya* (teacher) and the *antevasin* (learner), as an old Upanishad specifies, is the basis of all learning.[7] Whatever may be the vicissitudes of continuities and discontinuities, ruptures and repetitions in the tradition—all these departures moved on this essential pedagogical bond.

Colonialism disrupted this heritage precisely by rupturing the pedagogical bond between the teacher and the pupil. Colonialism advanced an alternative pedagogical ideal. That's why colonialism is analysed as an epistemic violence in postcolonial critiques. More than economic depredations and political subjugation colonialism's decisive and long-lasting impact can be noticed in the epistemic disruption of the survival base of the Sanskrit tradition. Colonial response to the Sanskrit tradition and pandits grew out of a culture of suspicion. William Jones decided to learn Sanskrit himself, for instance, as he became suspicious of the native informants (pandits and maulvis) on the catachrestic hybrid called the "Hindu law" (and Muslim law) in his court; he thought they were totally untrustworthy (Teltscher 1995, pp. 195–196). Orientalism's univocal judgements

[7] The Taittiriya verse runs as: *athadhividyam/ acharyah purva rupam antevasyuttararupam/ vidyah sandhihi pravachanam sandhanam ityadhividyam* (Thus, the learning: the teacher takes the former form/position and the learner the latter. What is learnt is the bridge, which can be prepared by study. Thus, learning can be gained.) (Sastry 1980, p. 38).

on the “lacks” of the Sanskrit tradition (lack of history, religion, morality) are too well known to be displayed here.

The Orientalist “discovery” of Sanskrit and India was described as a “second Renaissance” for Europe. This “Oriental Renaissance” ushered in an alternative to the Sanskrit tradition. The alternative, strategic but decisive, and colossal, evolved on two fundamental objectives—knowledge production and educational reforms. But the agents of both these tasks were now the European Orientalists. Consequently, the Sanskrit tradition received a decisive stroke as it became bereft of the two sources of its life—critical and creative reflection and performance, and the millennial pedagogical bond between the teacher and the taught. Orientalism initiated a “new” mode of knowledge production and a “new” method of teaching—through newly developed institutions. The language of this new knowledge was no longer Sanskrit (or Prakrit) but European; and its creators and teachers were no longer the traditional pandits and *acharya*s—but (European) Orientalists. Is it by accident that one seldom comes across Pandits of repute functioning within Sanskrit tradition during the 19th century?

No wonder the Sanskrit tradition in the 19th century (and subsequently) is replete with the names of Jones, Wilson, Max Muller, Mcdonnel, Keilhorn, Caland, Keith and a host of others—and no longer with a Sastry, a Dikshit and a Sharma. In other words, the Sanskrit tradition began to be claimed by a new set of inheritors. The Sanskrit tradition was metamorphed into Indology. Even to this day Indology is quintessentially a European discipline of thought (The “specter [of Orientalism] seems to be still haunting us” [Matilal 2002, p. 373].) Its objective: professional knowledge production; its method: European philological, historical and anthropological paradigms of the human sciences.

Indology’s two century-long signature can be said to leave a critical mark on the Sanskrit tradition—but it cannot be said to have exhausted this millennial tradition. This is for two specific reasons: (i) Indology is essentially a communication network among Indologists, created by (and for) Europeans (and Americans). Its transaction with the tradition would only consolidate the “inside” of this field and it would configure the Sanskrit tradition in its own image (with a “religion”, history, agency, law etc.). Indology has place for those “new Pandits” (Deshpande 2001) who are created by the field itself; and it cannot contain those of the tradition who are indifferent to the field—except, of course, as ethnographic objects. (ii) Unencumbered by the Indological weight, even unaware of it, survivors of the Sanskrit tradition continue to receive and respond to it in its own mnemocultural modes. The European Indological humanities has little role to play in the living on of this tradition.[8]

[8] For a significant account of such surviving tradition, cf. Sarma (2007).

3.3 Enframing Memory

Working from within the European conceptions of memory, Indological scholars like Charles Malamoud have repeatedly interpreted memory as a recoverable past present in a future present: “the past being experienced as if it were present” resulting in a sort of “happy ending” where the past present is recovered in the current present intact (Malamoud 1996, p. 251).

Contrary to this reception of memory, one could figure memory as a struggle to gather the unavailable thought experience or intimation, the intangible forces of reflection, from the remains of traces. Memory could only be the interminable groping through the finite, fragile but subtle, ineluctable and incalculable resources for discerning the unknown and the insatiable. No wonder, memory and desire are inseparable and often are expressed by the same term *smara* (memory and erotic desire) in Sanskrit tradition. Malamoud discusses this double take of *smara* and effectively relates it to Indian textual traditions; but he arrives at somewhat contrary conclusions whose implications can only be said to derive from the paradigmatic European response.

In his reading of Indic memory, in the context of literary texts, Malamoud reduces it to a recovery or regaining of a past present. Here both desire and memory sublimate or culminate in a *presence* of happy ending. This theme gains a curious ethnocentric turn when Malamoud extends his analysis of memory in the context of Indian (Sanskrit) textual traditions. Although Malamoud gives a detailed account of Indian interpretations of memory, memorized productions of knowledge, centrality of internalized knowledge—his ultimate judgment on this mnemocultural practice is ethnocentric. The “preeminence of knowledge by heart”, writes Malamoud, “bars tradition from being transformed into history”. Mnemocultural traditions, however intricately and complexly woven they are (“weaving them together, in a thousand different ways, a thousand different weaves”) or whatever the longevity of their pasts (“timeless”) (Malamoud 1996, pp. 256–257), are forever condemned to be anterior to history. Therefore, it is in vain, argues Charles Malamoud (1996 p. 255), “that one seeks to find any notion of recollections linking up with one another, or of their being distributed chronologically so as to form constellations which, while shifting remain coherent and integral….” There isn’t any notion of the existence of a “world of memory” in the Indic traditions, argues Malamoud. Since there is no unity or totality to impressions or manifestations of memory, there can be no idea here of a sustained, maturing growth of memory. In short, the epistemic figure of memory here does not lend itself to a narrative of identity.

Curiously, even a sophisticated theorist who immersed himself in Sanskrit textual tradition like Malamoud functions here with an orthodox conception of text in interpreting Sanskrit compositions. Before texts emerge, Malamoud states, there are data; the data are extra-textual. The function of the text is to record the process in which the extra-textual is related to the text. But can the concept of text be relegated to such a derivative status? Can one ever really have access to such

"extra-textual data" without the mediation of the material-textual? Isn't a conception of text as material formation or constitution of intelligibility always already at work in the very act of recognizing the so-called data which are supposed to have given birth to "texts"? Isn't it positivistic (which shares metaphysical, theological presumptions) naiveté to assume that data are free of textuality (as the material condition of intelligibility)?

Instead of attending to the singularity of Indic textual formations—which he sets out to examine—Malamoud evaluates and subjects them to a sort of ethnocentric teleology: "Knowledge incorporated in this [mnemotextual] way, moreover, erases the perception of that which connects the text to the world of extra-textual data out of which it originally arose" (Malamoud 1996, p. 257). Curiously, the insights he gained in the Indic interpretations of memory (autonomy of each instance of memory, non-consecutiveness of memories, and absence of a world of memory) are abandoned in his interpretation of the textual tradition. The epistemic signature of memory here is not seen as the possible organizing force of mnemotexts. Instead an orthodox reading of mnemocultures as devoid of history and as lacking in referential value gets repeated in Malamoud's work here: "Such is, at least, the situation in India where the very contents of texts are generally devoid of any reference to the actual conditions of their production" (Malamoud 1996, p. 257).[9]

The orthodoxy of Malamoud's reading here results in a confusion of epistemic and empirical issues of the argument. Setting out to explain how texts are formed and how knowledge is organized, instead of pursuing the more general implications and possibilities of Indic (Sanskrit) textual formation, the accents of its memories, Malamoud, by default as it were, subjects it to the ethnocentric (a particular conception of text and the relation between text and the world developed in the West) scrutiny. Consequently, he fails to respond to the most general lesson of the mnemotext: its ability to bracket or reduce any empirical context and content. In declaring India's failure to move tradition into history, Malamoud (like

[9] More eloquent impatience with the missing referents can be seen in the larger work of Sheldon Pollock: "Systematic thought in South Asia", argues Pollock (2001a, pp. 6–7, 12–15), "completely and utterly erased all evidence of its temporal being" for much of its existence. It "presented itself as something that took place entirely outside time." Indian thought made "all intellectual generations, disembedded from any spatio-temporal framework…" It evinced radical indifference to "contextuality" ("virtually a total absence of contextuality") and remained oblivious of other intellectual productions (Persian or vernacular—"not a shred of documentary evidence" indicating any relation between them). Unlike in the early modern period of Europe, on the Indian side there is, Pollock declares, "the pitiable impoverishment of its contextual data" (Pollock 2008, p. 537). In a similar vein, Jan Houben contends that in Sanskrit traditions, "concrete historical referentiality" is ubiquitous in its absence; he goes on to quote Pollock in support of his claim: "the general absence of historical referentiality in traditional Sanskrit culture remains an arresting problematic, and possibly unparalleled phenomenon…what could count as an adequate explanation for such a phenomenon is hard to see". Drawing on Ricoeure's thesis that narrative and historicity pervade and shape mundane life, Houben notes that neither of these is considered any way significant in Vedic-Brahminic thought. We shall return to the question of the narrative in Indian traditions later in this work. Cf. Houben (2002, pp. 463, 466).

other Indologists) forecloses the possibility of such a compositional formation to offer an account of the text in general.

Unlike in Plato's dream for a "pure" and live memory, memory without prosthetic surrogates, memory in the Sanskrit traditions receives attention mainly in the performative and proliferative movement of mnemotexts. Memory here is set to work in the acts of listening to, silent, interior recall and situational recitation (*shravana-manana-dharana*) of mnemotexts. In other words, memory is configured mainly in infinite reiterations of intricately composed codes of speech and gesture. These codes of memory and body have an epistemic status in the Sanskrit traditions. Yet, the performative rendering of these codes is not oriented towards any valorized truth or meaning of these codes. No wonder Sanskrit mnemocultures do not sublate these codes into "philosophy" or "dialectics". No wonder they have not erected any universalistic law codes. Nor have they lent themselves for nearly two millennia before the Common Era (as will be argued in detail in a later chapter) to any iconic or plastic and painted images.

In the Sanskrit (and other Indic) traditions the reflective impulse is animated by a certain kind of reasoning imagination that neither polarizes the two faculties (of reason and imagination) nor subordinates one to the other. Subordinating the imaginative to the valorized faculty of reason has normative sanction from the classical antiquity in European intellectual history (Plato's account of the "ancient war" between poets and philosophers in the *Republic* is well known). Discrete in its performance, the impulse of reasoning imagination silently and passively embodies or carries on the pulsating rhythms of intractable inheritances of reason *and* imagination of memory. As an impulse without fixation, the reasoning imagination forces itself through and beyond determined events, things, agencies and contexts. As a generative force it morphs and transforms (*vivarta)* itself disseminating verbal and visual genres in its trail as it pulsates through its contexts; it generates without end(s) and terminal destinations.

Memory in the Sanskrit tradition does not terminate into memorials. Memory here comports with an-architectural impulse. Neither tombs nor un-aging monuments of *eidos* or *eidolon* seem to tempt the memory to sublimate itself in some concretely externalized object. Another crucial word for memory (which continues to circulate in many everyday Indian languages) is *jnapaka*. The root source for this word and the most valued epistemic term for "awareness", knowing (*jnana*) is the same: *jna*. Here one can notice a striking contrast between the lithic Abrahamic conception of sign forces and the alithic Sanskrit reflective practice of them.

3.4 Atopal Mnemocultures

Mnemocultures are cultures of memory; mnemocultures draw on the planetary and ancestral memories. As mnemocultures embody and enact/perform memories they put to work the body persistently. Mnemocultures move in musical rhythms and performative reflections. Musically and acoustically composed verbal utterances and gestural inflections articulate these reflections. Thinking comes forth in embodied enactments, which in turn bring forth other such, but variant rhythms of thought. The compositions, reflective utterances of all the early poets of the Telugu literary tradition, for instance, even when they were familiar with and probably practised writing, were decisively shaped by the acoustic force; and their efficacy is in melodic performance of their compositions. The mnemocultural mode, as will be shown in detail later, persistently and innovatively repeats and structures radically heterogeneous creative and reflective compositions of Indian cultural formations; these repetitions improvise what they receive from across spatio-temporal distances and differences. Thought comes forth, resonates and moves as sonic waves, as body's culmination or consummation in lively reflections. The physical materiality of being in reflection comes forth in the ever changing alliterative, assonantal, plosive, percussional, nasal, guttural, phonic rhythms and enactments. The sound shapes the breath of thought in melodic waves.

Mnemocultures come forth as cultures of gesture and song. Song cultures are verbal and musical and they are not entirely subordinated to semantics or meaning. That is, both verbal and musical compositions and articulations (as in the Sama Veda chants or Vedic recitations in general; or, the ululations and wailing tunes of shepherd communities; or the musical traditions of Carnatic or Hindustani) are constituted more by non-semantic or musical (metrical) notes rather than by some pregnant, figural, connotative, verbal icons in alphabetic texts. In such metrically or musically oriented traditions, the given or received (for example: musical notes or elements of meter) are rendered in varied and countless ways; this impulse to improvise on the received can go on infinitely, for there is no normative line to which one is mechanically obligated in such rendering. Although the "given" (in a musical tune, or a melodic line, poetic utterance, *sutra* enunciation) is composed in accord with the finitude of note—and tonal variants—but neither the regulative notes nor the tonal rhythms delimit the exponential innovation of the tunes (*raga*s) and the explosive energies of experimentation. There is no normative model that commands musical composition. The vocal singularities proliferate a-destinally. In a related context, Mammata captures this a-normative force most evocatively: the *kavi*/singer's composing goes on in accord with, he says:

> *niyatikruta niyama rahimtam…*
> *ananya paratantranam*
>
> (Composed in accord with received conventions but which abides by no limits…and depends on nothing extraneous…)
>
> (Mammata 1995, pp. 1–2).

As is well known in Indic traditions the poetic and the musical are not too far apart. Poetry is always recited and often sung. The word "reading" inescapable in the use of the logo-alphabetic languages, in its cathexis on the visual act, does not capture the sonic force of the actual act of recitation, in rendering musical thought of/in poetry in Indic traditions. *Parayana* (recitation), *patha* (rendering), *dharana* (reciting), *pravachana* (exegetical commentary), *vachana* (sonic utterance), *paddana* (song), *kirtana* (praise song), *stuti* (praise song), etc., suggest different modes of utterance, recitation and reception of musically oriented reflection. Mnemocultures of gesture and speech have spread across as extraordinarily worked out differential systems in many ancient and un-archival cultures.

Reflective and creative compositions in Indian cultural formations preferred speech and gestural modes, musical-recitational and performative forms over millennia. Oral-gestural compositions over a score of centuries show indifference to writing even when this technique and technology was available. What is, rather, most intriguing in our context is that such phenomenal persistence of the embodied modes (speech and gesture) has not provoked any significant thought so far from the experience of changing communicational modes or systems. Why was there, for instance, such a cultivated indifference towards writing and recording systems even after writing became available in antiquity (by the time of Panini)? (Solomon 1995). Although there were no injunctions against writing (such as: thou shall not inscribe), why was writing ignored for centuries?

But more curiously, even when writing made decisive inroads into Indian cultural practices why is it that vocalic utterance, acoustic elaborations of compositions and embodied performatives continue to regulate creative and reflective work even to this day? This question gains even more significance when one notices that the Indian scribal output surpasses all the archives of ancient and medieval Europe put together at least by 1,000 times.[10] Why is it that even after writing or literacy has become unavoidable, they have not generated repositories and their custodians, that is centralized archives[11] and archons, to gather and regulate reflective and creative energies of poets and *shastrakara*s (discourse makers) and others for centuries? Why is it writing and literacy have not paved the way for a unified or normative law and a generalizing theoretical discourse (called philosophy) as they were supposed to have done in European cultural history? Why is it that the science of interpretation—hermeneutics—a science essentially based on written documents—has had no place

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[10] This number is suggested by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts; whereas the National Mission for Manuscripts suggests about 5 million manuscripts as the extant Indian scribal collection. Cf. Pollock (2007, p. 87). Also cf. Gopalakrishnan (2006, p. ix). David Pingree is said to have observed that the world-wide spread of Sanskrit manuscripts runs into 30 million. Cf., mail from Wujastyk on 19 March 2009, available at INDOLOGY@liverpool.ac.uk on LISTSERV.LIV.AC.UK.

[11] K. V. Sarma, a renowned scholar on Indian mathematics and astronomy, observed (in 2005) that "a very large number of science manuscripts in Sanskrit" lay dispersed in manuscript libraries and in private possession and that 90–95 percent of this scribal material is not available in print (and in translation) (Sarma 2009, p. 16). A Japanese scholar has identified some 18

in Indic reflective traditions? To my knowledge there is no single work in the Indian context which tracks the effects of writing on Indic reflective and creative traditions[12]; there is no account that tells us, as is claimed in the European context, whether and in what way Indic consciousness (if there is such a thing) was affected by the incursion of writing and literacy. Even to this day, point out Jan Houben and Saraju Rath largely drawing their arguments from "literacy thesis", "a study focused on manuscript culture and its cultural impact in India … is still absent" (Houben and Rath 2012, p. 6, also p. 24 on "literacy thesis").

Although isolated references to writing (*lipi*) and *grantha/pustaka (*"book") are found in the second millennium, literary inquiries emphasize more on recitational and performative modes of composition. In fact a 10th century composition, as will be shown later, on literary inquiry emphatically renders reading as an act of re-citation, and enumeratively specifies the varied effects of different readings. Further the same composition, while acknowledging prevalence of writing and writing material, identifies the poet as the one who does not write. The poet needs scribes all the time. The poet (*kavi*) is not the scribe (we shall return to this later) (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 158).[13] The creative force surges out mnemoculturally. Even in the 20th century the renowned Telugu poet-thinker Viswanatha Satyanarayana is famously known for conceiving his work mnemoculturally.[14] Scribes used to record as the *dharana* of the poet persisted. Similarly, Kshemendra insists that the aspiring poet dedicate his *ear* to compositions in multiple languages.

In creative and reflective domains the mnemocultural force makes mnemotechnics superfluous; unlike in the Abrahamic cultural formations, the creative

(Footnote 11 continued)
manuscript libraries so far in India (including Nepal). Cf. http://ricas.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/eng/asj/html/guide/india/i_11_f.html as accessed on 25 March 2013.

[12] Pollock's paper (2007) mainly contends that print, as in the case of Europe, has had no significant impact in Indian cultural history. Consequently, he emphasizes in this paper and elsewhere in his work, the predominance of manuscript (or scribal) culture in India. However, when one examines this claim more closely in Pollock's paper, one cannot fail to notice that even manuscript culture could not undermine the power of the acoustic or recitational orientation of Indian cultural formations. Secondly, Pollock while aimed at critiquing the universal claims of print culture pays no attention at all to the universalist claims made in European tradition regarding the impact of literacy or writing. If writing was such a crucial "technological" development in the Indian context as Pollock claims, how do Indian scribal cultures differ from those of the West? Among the various works that deal with the impact of writing in Greek antiquity, cf. Havelock (1963). For a critique of Havelock, see Ferrari (1984, pp. 194–204).

[13] Throughout this work I have used bilingual editions of Sanskrit and Telugu texts. Unless until mentioned otherwise, all translations of Sanskrit-Telugu accounts are mine.

[14] In his novel on the legendary figure of Nagasena (who confronted king Milinda—Menander) Viswanatha describes the surviving Veda pandits as unlettered people: *"Panditulaku vraayanu jaduvanu raadu."* (Pandits cannot read and write.) (Viswanatha 1961/2006, p. 6).

force here did not lend itself to the scribal art of calligraphy, illumination and embellishment of scribal work. Although Kautilya mentions "archives" (*aksha-patala*) (*Arthashastram* 1999/2004, 2.7.1, p. 132), such scribal documentation was confined exclusively to revenue and administrative domains. Nowhere does Kautilya (or Sukracharya) refer to any repository of creative and reflective work (of the kind one associated with the Library of Alexandria).

3.5 Lithic Lineaments

Mnemocultures in general remain indifferent to lithic mnemotechniques. Indologists, brought up on lithic traditions, are deeply intrigued by the persistent indifference to writing (and print) for centuries in Sanskrit (and early Buddhist) cultures. Yet, some of the scholars persist in "theorizing" this "exceptionally strong memory culture" in India as actually a reaction formation to literacy. Thus in a recent work Jan Houben and Saraju Rath state that the "attested aversion" towards writing in ancient Avestan and Vedic texts "incited [the 'authors' of these compositions] to create a competitive alternative in the form of oral techniques for faithful transmission…." of these compositions. But do the Vedic compositions indicate any awareness, let alone "attested aversion", of writing systems at all? What could be the basis of such an eloquent assertion? The phantasmatic (and self-contradictory) account that these authors provide is amusing, to say the least: The "ancestors of the authors [sic] of the Avesta and the authors [sic] of the RgVeda … were sufficiently close to and familiar with current writing systems…but they were far enough removed geographically … to develop their literature and linguistic disciplines significantly without being overwhelmed by writing" (Houben and Rath 2012, pp. 32–33). By "current writing systems" these authors refer to Akkadian and Egyptian notational systems. But given the fact that no one in the last two millennia ventured to show any connection between the hieroglyph and cuneiform scripts and the Vedic compositions, one wonders what prompted these authors to make such a claim. How does one know that the putative "ancestors" of the "authors" of the RgVeda were lithophobic? How does this alleged anxiety about writing impact the "authors" who were said to be too far away anyway to be affected by writing? The claim seems to betray symptoms of literacy thesis (which pairs literacy with cognitive rationality) than help us in approaching mnemocultures.

3.6 Systemic Pathos

Mnemocultural creative force nurtured un-archival impulses. Barely attending to this mnemocultural force of reflection and performance, Sheldon Pollock, the most eloquent commentator on Sanskrit traditions in the West today, for instance, sets to reduce the emergence of literary culture of *kavya* (poetic composition) to the onset of literacy. The culture of literacy and that of the literary are "indissociably

connected with manuscript culture, so much so that the history of one becomes unintelligible without taking into account the history of the other" contends Pollock (2007, pp. 80–81). Despite this grand filiation between the literary and the culture of literacy, when he actually examines the dynamic of Indian cultural creations, Pollock is compelled to acknowledge: "At all events, it seems clear that printing was another [apart from writing] of the technologies that people in South Asia rejected as inferior or irrelevant to the material realities of their literary cultures" (2007, p. 87).[15] Pollock barely attends to what these "material realities" are. Similarly, while trying to track the relation between the royal court and creativity and reflectivity in Sanskrit traditions, Pollock is impelled to acknowledge that even when there was "penury of courtly [scribal] production", song cultures (of Purandaradasa and others') flourished in the Vijayanagara empire (2001b, pp. 401–402).

In South Asia, the orthotic literacy cannot be said to have exhausted the forces of gesture and speech of mnemocultures. Their articulations are not always under the shadow of writing cultures. Speech and gesture can disseminate themselves outside and in the archives of literacy even after centuries of exposure to literacy. What is involved here appears to be not so much a scribal literacy but a reiterative learning through gesture and speech. One decisive factor for their indifference towards mnemotechniques appears to be that by the time the scribal technology became prevalent, Sanskrit reflective traditions for nearly two millennia have forged their entire reflective heritage in the most primordial speech and gestural modes. These modes of acoustic-performative enunciation continued to ingrain all the subsequent (subsequent to the emergence of mnemotechnics) reflective creative compositions. The sonic materiality of metrical musical articulation forged the modes of *shravana* (attentive listening) *manana* (focused remembrance), *dharana* (active performance) and *nidhidhyasa* (meditative reflective concentration) and these modes have for millennia generated and enabled embodied circulations of reflections in the Sanskrit (and other Indian) traditions. This preferred weaving of sonic-acoustic and gestural modes are deeply shaped by a radical conception of the relation between the body and symbol, of being and mode of being.

Cultures of memory in the Sanskrit traditions have over millennia evinced relative indifference towards representational, inscriptional technologies. Both plastic arts and writing emerge nearly two millennia after the emergence and proliferation of Sanskrit reflective and recitational traditions in the Indian subcontinent. Mnemocultures disseminate themselves un-archivally and un-architecturally; without the archive, museum and libraries,[16] mnemocultures circulate and

[15] On the rejection of the "values, and the very fact, of manuscript culture" by the mnemocultural composers (Vachanakaras, Narsimehta, Kabir and others), cf. Pollock 2007, p. 83.

[16] Historians like Hartmut Scharfe document Buddhist "libraries" (and "universities") in the second half of the first millennium and libraries in the Vaidica tradition in the second millennium. However, none of these institutions has had any effect on the Vedic acoustic recitational traditions (cf. Scharfe 2002, Chap. 10, "From Temple Schools to Universities", pp. 166–193).

disseminate themselves performatively, acoustically through embodied enactments. Anamnesic immersive rearticulation of the sonic resonance is not directed by empirical spatio-temporal coordinates, at least these rearticulations display no use for them.

Speech and gesture articulate memory-traces. Scribal culture and its subsequent avatars attempt to reduce them for the purposes of externalized articulation in tangible forms. Yet the persistence of these forces of the sign indicates that they can escape the reductions of the scribal power; they survive in the intimacy of the body—blurring the border between the enacted, embodied and externalized, objectified memories. Plato's Egyptian divine King, Thamus, in the *Phaedrus* resents the new craft of writing when the god of the art, Thoth, presents it to him. Contrary to Thoth's claim that writing would liberate memory, the king observes that it would rather increase forgetfulness, that it would enslave men to the craft.[17] Writing and its extended avatars (print, image, digital creations) are irreducibly disembodied and externally retained (from the codex to database forms) articulations of memory. In other words, preservation of memories in surrogate (inorganic) bodies makes the immemorial body complex increasingly redundant; one can abandon it as one relegates oneself more and more to prosthetic bodies.

3.7 Retentional Passions

Literacy (especially alphabetic literacy) makes possible retention of memories outside the body—in surrogate or prosthetic apparatuses; archives and museums are such surrogates to the organic body. Archives articulate and retain memories externally. All archival passions assume the gathered material artefacts to illustrate or represent essential identities—of the human, nation, race and individual. Archives in this regard hope to be preserves of the past presences.

As repositories of objectified memories archives contain the work of hand. Ranging from the earliest "Paleolithic art" and artefacts and moving across the various systems of communications such as oral, scribal, print, audio-visual, and the most recent digital, the work of hand puts to work the deeply heterogeneous material substances such as stone, clay, birch-bark, animal-hide, palm-leaf, papyrus, wood, metal, rubber, wax, glass, paper, textile, coir, fiber, plastic, wool, lacquer, jute, and other substances.

Yet, the archive as a retention system appears to be the handiwork of the scribal culture. Whether it is cuneiform tablet or the hieroglyphic stele or scroll of papyri or *tala-patra*s, the scribal text dominated the archive. No wonder the manuscript becomes a near-sacred fetish object in archival precincts. Typically, the diary, the letter, pamphlet, and private notes—all the emblems of scribal inscriptions haunt

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[17] For Socrates' discussion of the relation between memory and dialectics in the *Phaedrus* (Plato 1952, pp. 124–125).

the light of the inquirer's mind. The manuscript—the alleged source of literacy and logic not only peopled the archives from antiquity (Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum and Ptolemy's Library of Alexandria)—appears to have inaugurated the lure of property. Scribes were the coolies who augmented the wealth of a house owned by the lord of the archive. The archons, we remember were the citizens—and they were the guardians and interpreters of the manuscripts they garnered and commanded. The legacy of literacy in the related forms of scribality, law and property, continues to have (more) hold on the archive in general even to this day. Gesture and speech, bare elemental forces of the hand and face, and essential substrate of all materialized memories are still measured by the scale of literacy. They are framed as the figures of the origin retrospectively.

Mnemocultural traditions celebrate neither an archive nor an archon. There appears to be no Indic counterpart to the Alexandrian Library, which the literate (like Aristophanes) visited with feverish passion to pour over the manuscript scrolls. The Sanskrit tradition appears to have by-passed or de-toured with an indifference the manuscriptural archivation. It must however, be pointed out that the indifference is only towards the scribal craft in the literal sense. The tradition is deeply aware of the metonymic relations within language and deems language as just one instance of a profounder principle of relation, connection, knot or bond across diverse elements of the universe—of the planetary memories.

What is heard and learnt appears to be a part of the body—acquired character communicated across generations by the face and hand through the rhythms of the body—inscribed on the memory-scape through the substrate of the material assemblage called the body. The "archive" in the form of embodied and externalized memories (*smruti*s) of speech and gesture existed essentially with(in) the body in mnemocultures. These organic archives were embodied and as such they spread across the length and breadth of the sub-continent. The Sanskrit phonetic tradition analyses language in its various aspects in minutest details and filiates each element to a part of the body (for ex. consonants with the body, fricatives with breath, vowels with soul etc.). These are the drifting non-centred enactments and iterations of the received verbal compositions.

As is well known in the context of India, colonialism introduced the concept of the archive and inaugurated the practice of the centralized accumulation of documents. In a way colonialism can be described as initiating a colossal conflict of the archives. It's a conflict of two distinct modes of remembrance and articulation of heritages. It can be said that colonialism is a decisive encounter between an an-archival tradition and a mnemotechnical civilizational pedagogical programme. Indeed it's a conflict between the scribal culture of monotheism (which began with Moses and the lithic script of the Commandments) and the dispersed enactments of mnemocultures. Colonialism (with its mnemotechnical-archival heritage) ruptures this mnemocultural performative ethos.

In the conflict of the archives, the civilizational pedagogic model accomplished its task by two powerful modes: (i) by displacing or reducing the prevailing immemorial traditions of speech and gesture; and (ii) by instituting "new" modes of teaching and "new" materials for education. These new initiatives measured the

tradition (or reduced it) in terms of scribal or print systems—systems that formed the bedrock of monotheism. (Translation and printed circulation of the Bible exceeded any single text in the history of human kind). Retrieval and standardization of "reliable" manuscriptural texts became the noblest vocation of the civilizational archival mission in the 19th century. A plethora of "pandits" serving as native informants functioned as scribes and lent themselves to the making of the colonial archive for in-scribing and "fixing' the tradition. (Initiated into the civilizational pedagogic programme, these "new" pandits began to emerge from the second half of the 19th century.)

One can imagine the mnemocultural pandit, whose inheritance was the tradition of alithic *smarana-manana-dharana* (of silent recall, meditative repetition, and eloquent recitation), and who valued reiterational, recitational competence and talent, iconically framed as holding a text. This is indeed what symptomatically figures in the 19th century monument erected in memory of Sir William Jones at Oxford University. Among other images that vaunt Jones' incomparable ability to combine Asian and Attic musical traditions and yet maintain his European reason, it literally exhibits the scene of writing that establishes the dissymmetry of tradition, and in fact displays the fundamental conflict of the archives.

In the sculpted scene we notice Jones sitting at a desk with a quill/pen in hand writing down something. In the front, at his feet on the bare floor we find rather oddly seated "pundits" (two of them, the third an unclear image—could be a maulvi?), one with head bent, pouring over a *book* placed in his lap; the other with his raised left hand resting on the knee and his fist appears to support his jaw or chin. The inscription says it all: "Sir formed a digest of Hindu and Mohammedan laws." But "Sir" actually formed something much more than merely codifying laws for the Hindus. He was inaugurating the lithic work of hand to be possessed and preserved institutionally. The monument identifies the archon and founds the new archival establishment. Is it fortuitous that the black tome that fixed the attention of the seated pandit should look like the Bible? This scene of writing is a legitimizing display of the archival passions—set against the immemorial mnemocultures.[18]

No wonder the 19th and 20th centuries saw the proliferation of experts and new pandits who could wield command over the retrieved material—indeed the archons of Indology. Needless to say that these archons are all nurtured in the civilization of the archives (the case of Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar is exemplary). These archons remain entangled in the philological-historical protocols and editorial commandments (for shoring up a standard, "critical", authentic text—the "definitive edition"). The medieval (Christian) scholastic anxieties of canon-formation seem to programme the

[18] Typically, C. P. Brown, a civil servant in Andhra in his mission to retrieve and amass Telugu literary manuscripts, had evinced no interest at all in the recitational cultures that were prevalent (as they are even to this day) in the early 19th century. He frantically searched for manuscripts of Vemana (a 17th century poet) but totally ignored the song traditions of Vemana poetry. Even to this day itinerant communities performatively render Vemana's poetry and life. More about this later in Chap. 9.

destinies of the traditions of speech and gesture of the Sanskrit and other Indic traditions in the 19th century.

Almost every scholar/critic working in the field of Indic studies is aware of the alithic or mnemocultural system and substance of the Sanskrit heritage. Yet rarely (almost never) does the system and mode receive any epistemological attention. The substance of the heritage gets often a historical/linearized treatment in the hands of Indological scholars. Often scholars like Bothlingk (to Olivelle), disregarding the proliferative force of the mnemic heritage, sought to squeeze out single "critical" editions of specific texts. In such an enterprise the pluridimensionally circulating texts first get reduced to the newly gathered scribal mode and substance—and then they are—after the "correction"—get subjected to the newly emergent print mode. Once the print mode makes over the routes of epistemic circulation, the proliferative mnemocultural force gets displaced. For the mode brings forth an unforeseen category of addressees (the readers) who begin to stake claims over the heritage. Indology as a print dominated mode of inquiry remains a communicative network among the new inheritors.[19] Their inquiry is conditioned by and functions as a response to the lithic/print/digital mode of organizing/circulating inheritances.[20] Once the print mode became the dominant vector of

[19] These networks, emerged over the 19th and 20th centuries of print technology, have now evolved to accumulate by means of digital mnemotechniques. Among the most recent ones one can mention the grand project—Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism. This (now) Columbia University based project aimed at achieving: "four linked tasks: inventory the intellectual production in seven disciplines during this period; collect unpublished manuscripts and documents from archives in South Asia; create a bibliographical and prosopographical database derived from printed and manuscript sources; study selected Sanskrit works according to a uniform analytical matrix." The project (spread from 2001–2004) was funded by NEH and NSF. Cf., http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pollock/sks/proposal.html#text8 as accessed on 23 May 2013. A more recent one is the US (Columbia)-Germany (Heidelberg) bilateral project of SARIT: "Search and Retrieval of Indic Texts (SARIT, a Sanskrit word for "river") proposes to create a corpus of Sanskrit texts focused on three areas: Buddhist philosophy, Vedic hermeneutics, and literary theory." This project integrates its archival initiative with the ongoing projects of the Heidelberg and Columbia (Sanskrit Knowledge Systems). Cf., NEH site. http://www.neh.gov/divisions/odh/grant-news/announcing-4-nehdfg-bilateral-digital-humanities as accessed on 6 June 2013.

[20] Anyone who has followed the flurry of email exchanges (mainly among Euro-American scholars) that flashed across the Indology website in 2004 after the attack on the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), India, would not have missed the reaffirmations of European responsibility for Indological archives. The BORI episode could be discussed as really the problem of the archive and the archon. Although the frenetic responses to it from the West (40 email exchanges in three days between 5 and 8 January 2004) treat it more as a problem of "fundamentalism", the episode brings to the fore the anxieties of the archons—the founders and custodians of "cultural material (documents)". BORI, founded in the name of a new pandit, a creation of European Indological adventure, embodies and exemplifies centralized lithic heritage—a heritage that is to be governed and managed by the new inheritor in the figure of Indologist. No wonder the Indologist continues to talk in terms of "rational" "scientific" "us" and the "religious", "ethnic" "them" who "do not want to be helped". The episode for some appeared to be an event that would "relieve Western scholars of any bad conscience they might harbour for Western acquisition of manuscripts." BORI is more an object of European

organizing and disseminating the past, even the heterogeneity of scribal (manuscript) mode (collected, preserved in centralized archives through systematic institutional and administrative channels) seldom receives attention.[21]

3.8 Un-Archival Circulations

The archival impulse is the legacy of colonial modernity. Wherever colonial institutions took root—this impulse gripped all those who crossed their precincts. When one looks at this entirely novel archival drive—spanning across nearly two

(Footnote 20 continued)
accomplishment than anything else. It must be saved from the pathologies of ethnic disorder, native to the country. "Our job is to give a realistic, rational account of South Asian matters that make sense to educated people *in our own countries,* using the methods and approaches that are normally used in academic life ['our discipline']" (emphasis added).

But what was the status of these manuscripts before Indology's archival fever began to accumulate them and found institutions? This can be glimpsed in an aside (indicating the laborious task of the Indologist in the field) from a post which is about the exaggerated sensational news about the destruction of Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts the previous year (in 2003): "I know that there are 'one-of-a-kind' manuscripts of which no one knows of another copy. How many such 'one-of-a-kind' manuscripts were in this Sanskrit university can never be known. What we need is a door-to-door survey of Vajracharya priests' and Shakyas' personal collections throughout the KV and a similar one for Hindu materials which I am personally far less familiar with."

Indolgical and South Asianist work continues to busy itself with the task of retrieving and archiving "indigenous knowledges": "photograph or copy and distribute manuscript material as soon as possible." This task is seen as a Western responsibility in this [Indology] discussion group. Otherwise, "It is frightening that thousands of manuscripts and cultural objects simply are destroyed for the most harebrained of reasons." In this work of the West "it is regrettable" that "in Indological fora like the present one the active participation from Indian and India-based scholars is practically nil." If this is true, why is it so? Curiously, when *The Hindu* reported about the letter of protest from the Indology discussion group to the Prime Minister and others, it names mainly European and the US Indologists and South Asianists (except Romila Thapar)—as if the BORI event is the concern only of the West.

The BORI episode once again reinforces the difference between lithic and alithic cultural practices. But above all, it consolidates the passions of archivation which invaded the mnemocultural India for two centuries. The pathos of the episode, as discussed in the group, is a symptom of archive fever that Derrida unraveled. The accumulated objects of such drives and the institutions that guard them have little to communicate with the survival of the cultures of memory that we are invoking here. Email archives on the BORI episode can be found in the archives of: INDOLOGY@liverpool.ac.uk

[21] For a symptomatic celebratory account of the arrival of print which completely forgets or disavows the surviving acoustic cultures of memory in the provincial Indian context of Madras, cf. Venkatachalapathy (2012). The symptom of colonial-ideological frame can't be missed in the very opening sentence of this book: "In the beginning was the word. And then came print, adding immensely to its fascination." The book has little to offer in reflection on these crucial terms "word" and the "beginning" in the Indian context.

centuries (the exact period of colonial modernity and our contemporaneity)—what strikes one is its resolute tone-deafness, its decisive separation of the scribal from the acoustic. Such a separation was unheard of in the entire stretch of Indic cultural formations. It is not just the question of practical limitations (lack of audio-recording facilities in the early phases) that is the issue here. What is at stake here is the decisive alteration of reflective practices through the new apparatuses (like the archive and museum) in the colonial civilizational programme.

What receives the centre of attention here is the centralized object called the "text"—a scribal artifact resulting from sifting, filtering manipulative mechanisms of the expert reader or group of readers who are oblivious to or insensitive to the acoustic force of the composition. Once such an object is brought forth into existence it reduces all the multiple versions of the composition from circulation—if these versions are not already captured in some prohibitive archive. Thus, for example, we barely get to know about the fifty-odd manuscripts of Vemana once Brown's edition emerges.

But surely colonialism did not initiate scribal collections? Indeed Jain Bhandaras, sectarian mathas, temples and above all regional kingdoms did maintain personal, cult or royal collections (Scharfe 2002, Chaps. 9 and 10). Turks were said to have destroyed Nalanda "libraries"; Bahamanis did this to Vijayanagara empire; Mughals are said to have burnt the libraries of Chithodgarh; the British East India Company acquired Tipu Sultan's collections; the Nayakas and the Marathas are reputed to have maintained scribal collections. Even individuals like Kavindra Sarasvati of Kashi is said to have had a collection of "thousands of" manuscripts in the 17th century (Ganeri 2011, p. 14) (and this collection is said to have moved into Raja Anupasimha's repository [Pollock 2006]).[22] Yet the nature of these collections in the first (mainly Buddhist and Jain) and the second millennia (Persian, Islamic) is very different from the systematic and institutionally expanding archivization drive of European colonialism. In the new cultural politics of British rule the archive is the source of knowledge and power—it is the most powerful informational passage to grasp the native mind. The very concept of the archive is deeply shaped by the conception of nation. Whereas the pre-colonial scribal collections had no institutional status; nor were they conceived as sources of power and knowledge. Above all, no unifying conception of nation brought them forth.

It is surely plausible to assume that the creative reflective life of these domains (temples, *vihara*s, kingdoms, *matha*s) is not outside the literacy of scribal culture; surely the poets and *shastrakara*s were familiar with scribes and palm-leaves (let's recall Srinatha's contempt for scribes).[23] Some of them even might have had their own copies of various compositions of their interest. Yet nowhere do we come across any reference or sense of a common repository, a centralized archive under

[22] Pollock refers to this poet as Kavindracharyasarasvati (2006, pp. 42–43).

[23] Srinatha was a 15th century Telugu poet. Cf. Rao and Shulman (2012). On Srinatha's disparagement of scribes, cf. Ramachandra (1957/1993, p. 253).

the control of any royal power which the *kavi-pandita*s (poet-savants) frequented. The scribal compositions were dispersed—individually received or circulated; we are yet to come across any reference to Rajarajanarendra acquiring any *Mahabharata* palm-leaf collections for Nannaya in the 11th century for his Telugu rendering of the *itihasa*. The routes through which these scribal artefacts circulated appear to be through the dispersed but connected nodal points of region or estate-specific, periodic, literary reflective gatherings (*goshti*s).

Colonial organizations such as the Asiatic Society, oriental institutions (Madras, Mysore, Maharashtra), Deccan College, Bhandarkar Institute and other archivally driven establishments began to displace the diversely interlaced circuits of performative learning and responsive receptions of the traditions. The scribal-philological identity of these institutions (as was the case elsewhere) is contingent upon their severance from mnemocultural performative sources.

What we have elaborated so far can be formulated in a single sentence: despite the circulation of writing before colonialism, there is no simple continuity between Indic scribal cultures and the archival institutions of colonial empire. Mnemocultural performativity structured the scribal cultures earlier for millennia. Both the critical factors of embodied memory and lively performativity were either silenced or effaced in the imperium or the scriptorium of the archive. The question as to who possessed the manuscript did not appear to have much significance earlier[24]; what mattered in the mnemocultural milieu was how one responds to the received in the acoustic-performative mode.

3.9 Mnemic Materiality

Mnemocultural traditions live on with what they have. They certainly cannot be outside the modes of symbolization, which distinguish their modes of being in the world. Here every act of symbolization, whether it comes forth as a tangible or intangible form, is primarily configured as an experiential enactment, an embodied preformative, a praxial reflection. Every act of symbolization puts the body to work. The body as the experiential entity brings forth and lives on in diverse modes of symbolization. Although the constitutively supplemental and prosthetic

[24] Lest one should presume that the epistemic conflict of memory and archive as a problem of "Sanskrit Knowledge Systems", one must recount an anecdote from a Savara (aboiriginal) mnemocultural experience. A Savara elder from Araku valley (in Vizag) when compelled to part with his ancestrally inherited palm-leaf medicinal manuscript (for an Englishman), simply made yet another copy on palm-leaves with a stylus and kept the inherited one with himself. But when asked whether he was not losing his inherited medicinal learning and knowledge, the 80-year-old Savara laughed and said: what is there in that book, if he (the Englishman) needs herbs he will have to come to these mountains and slopes and recognize these leaves and roots. The Savara, who was rapidly losing his eye-sight, identified his plants and roots with his touch and smell—and not by turning the palm-leaves. Cf. Rao (2013, pp. 44–48). Mnemocultural memories get articulated mainly through the medium of the (acoustic and gestural) body.

role of these modes cannot be reduced, their discontinuity with the body cannot be ignored, mnemocultural modes of symbolization are indifferent in sublimating these modes and codes into autonomous (from the body) systems per se.

Every mode of being is an instantiation of the body complex that generates symbolization. The measure—if there is any—of a mode of being must be reckoned in being rather than in saying *about* being. Forms of saying are, in the ultimate reckoning, incommensurable with modes of being. In other words, all forms of saying—including performative ones—are reducible. We shall return to this thematic in the chapter on the *Mahabharata*.

The pursuit of the symbol per se (to the exclusion of the body) requires history (historical reckoning) and exemplification; and these two techniques insist on a determined spatio-temporal coordinates as etiological sources of signification. Cultural intellectual pursuits of Europe remain entirely committed to the work of the externally retained symbol. Consequently, all their inquiries into the materiality of signification structurally, ontologically remain differentiated from the mnemopraxial concerns of the body complex. Archives, libraries, and the entire paraphernalia for accumulation, classification, retrieval and spread/expansion are endemic to such derivative pursuit of materiality. Inscriptional technologies in particular exemplify and expand the derivative determination of the material. Wherever such regimes of the material have taken root and expanded, they required governing and archonal authority. Such authority was/is wielded by political and religious establishments in the cultural and intellectual history of the West. The more such apparatuses and their authorities expanded the more mnemocultures receded.

Mnemocultural relation to techné turns on the medium of the body—the body plays the substrate of what comes forth from it, whether it is recitation, speech, narrative, performative or song. Whereas among the archontic cultural formations the material substrate as an instrument draws attention to what is accomplished by *means* of it—writing or inscription (and the substrate for writing from clay tablets, stone plaques to digital screens and tablets). Although in principle techné—technics and know-how, what is brought forth and the mode of bringing forth—lends itself to be tended exclusively, mnemocultures are oriented more towards performative renderings of techné—that is, through the embodied modes of unfolding in speech and gesture. The only perishable substrate/medium on/in which these modes come forth or are rendered is the body itself.

The body is surely objectifiable (the Neanderthal's jaw-bone, femur, club, the dinosaur's skull etc., can be represented and museumized) but that tells us nothing of the Neanthropic mnemocultures. Moreover, any amount of "telling" about them (DNA studies, genetic mappings, migrational routes)—which is surely possible—misses the point, the point that the embodied techné (what is brought forth in and of the body) must be reckoned in its performative efficacy rather than in its arcana and meaning or in its surrogate existence in the archives or museums.

In mnemocultural technics the materiality of the body is essential—its efficacy cannot be derived from its instrumental or secondary appropriations. The body is the absolute medium which even as it remains the "same" lends itself into

something else. Speech and gesture—technics or prosthetics of the body—come forth through the morphing of the body, through the body's own internal/external torsions. If the internal movement of the body organs is essential for the emergence of the significance of sound, the external gesticulation of limbs and face function as irreducible supplements of utterance. Imagine a Bhimsen Joshi or a Dagar[25] brother's body torsions, or Nusrat's facial contortions and convulsions that supplement their magnificently modulated voices. It looks as if the writhing of the body constitutes the rhythm of the sound, as if the "pleasure" of the sound unfolds through the pain of the body. As in the case of the body so in the case of sound: they both emerge through dis-*torsion*. Needless to point out that these heterogeneous sound forms (of the Vedic and musical) are all a-graphical (in the empirical sense) and alithic in their circulation over millennia. They continued to remain, by choice as it were, indifferent to the alphabetic form and notational script.

Similarly, the dance forms of India are the most intricate articulations of gestural force. Dance indeed demonstrates a differential structure of discreet moves enacted through distinct body parts. The significatory status of these performative gestural forces is enumerated at a micrological level in the dance traditions, and this gestural-haptic code opened itself to articulating very diverse domains (we shall address this thematic in the next part of this work.) These intricately and elegantly layered and correlated sign-forces and sense forms of the heritage and their alithic traditions and codes of speech and gesture have formed the cultural prosthesis and mnemocultural inheritances of the collective but heterogeneous pasts and creative practices of the sub-continent over millennia. Here, one can note that the most primal translational work is in fact the performative one—bringing forth something *of* the body. The "translated" is not regulated by either the archontic (original factoid) or semantic (adequation of meaning) but by the essential recursive concern of putting the body to work—as the forces of memory and desire bring forth the body.

If mnemocultures live on through the modes of meditative recall and embodied performatives in being (in the world), then surely one can ask whether some larger ideal about the modes and being is implicitly at work in these cultures. If such a sense of being is not at work—then they (the mode/being) could not have drawn attention at all as they have done in the mnemocultural traditions over millennia. What is fundamentally at stake here appears to be the question of being in the world. The Socratic question "how should one live?" can inaugurate accounts and problems concerning ideal modes of living. Such a question has lent itself to cognitive and epistemological accounts about worthy (ethical) life. Consequently, the question of being (how should one live?) gets a divided response—a response that brings forth "new" domains: epistemological, cognitive and ethical. This orientation raises a fundamental question: should the Socratic question necessarily

25 Well-known exponents and performers of classical Indian music traditions. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was an exponent of Sufi music tradition from Pakistan.

lend itself to such domains of reckoning? Does such reckoning in the most rigorous probing commensurate with the question of being at all? Should the reflective inquiry on living end in a reckoning *about* being? This work grapples with these questions in several chapters.

As argued so far, although symbolization inevitably involves mnemocultures in relentless activity of supplementation, substitutions, prosthesis, these cultures of memory do not lend themselves to divided domains of the ethical and epistemological (cognitive). Here the "desire" seems to instantiate itself in mode and in being—in the mode of being. The distantiation of the body from symbol, prioritization of the externally retained symbol (as a surrogate body) and emphasizing the materiality of the symbol (and the external retentional systems—such as the inscription, book, archive, museum, library, database) gain prominence when mnemocultures are disregarded or when they are "overcome". As the origins and destinations of memory or desire are impossible to track and determine, no archontic or teleological orientation has any privileged status in the context of mnemopraxial existence. Even when one comes across the array of differential bodies—as everybody is impelled to put to work one's endowed/accursed body as the only way of grappling with the forces of generativity—no body has an exclusively privileged status. Everybody has to live on its finitudinal existence and grapple with the enigma of being in distinct modes of being. (We shall return to this theme.)

3.10 Configurations of Mnemotexts

But how are these alithic sign forces organized into a "system" or a code? What kinds of textualities emerge from such compositions? How do they affect the sense in its two senses? How are the sense and sign articulated in these textualities? What is their prosthetic and programming mode? Above all, what is their condition of possibility and their singularity of articulation? This work attempts to address these questions in configuring what I call a "mnemocultural response" in general. Such a response comes forth in the form of mnemotexts in these traditions.

A mnemotext is a composition which is recited or performed, enacted and embodied. Even if it is circulated in a scribal milieu, its efficacy is reckoned in terms of its remembered and re-cited value. Mnemotexts are open-ended in the sense that they proliferate with augmentations and varied repetitions; mnemotexts cannot be totalized with a unified structure and in each of its manifestations it can range from a segment to a large portion. A mnemotext is composed of (a) allusion (implicit, oblique reference to other compositions) (b) citation (quoting from other texts) (c) ellipsis (allusive, suggestive, incomplete yet pregnant aphoristic composition), (d) enumeration (numerical organization or classification of material), (e) melopoeia, (musical-metrical reflective composition), and (f) reasoning imagination (without any hierarchy between them). With these specific compositional features the mnemotext circulates as an interminably proliferative and

non-totalizable weave. Its manifestation is not directly linked to any specific empirical temporal/spatial coordinates. Mnemotexts are organized on the epistemic figure of memory—memory as singular and incalculable occurrence or emergence.

Although mnemotexts in their indexical relation to memory drift across immemorial pasts carrying ineffable impressions and although they are forever open to inventive futures—they are not anchored in any narrative lineages. Mnemotexts are not governed by, as will be shown in the next chapter, any cumulative, sequential or aggregative logic. The force of proliferation guides them, and they disperse across all sorts of temporal and spatial determinations. The efficacy of a mnemotext is neither in its authenticity nor in the gravity of its content. The life of a mnemotext is contingent upon the singularity of its performance, in its interminable articulations of memory and desire from the pores of the body. As will be shown in the following chapters, mnemocultural response is composed through the mnemotextual elements configured here.

3.11 The Mnemocultural Difference

Mnemocultures cannot be reduced to what has been consolidated in the form of orality studies; for the field is the immaculate conception of the literate world, a creation of "literacy thesis". Mnemocultures non-linearly explore the most primordial modes (speech and gesture) of symbolization. The anthropological and linguistic (and literary) work impoverishes mnemocultures by reducing them to speech/oral/song communities. Such a work continues to epistemically subordinate mnemocultures to the imperium of literacy and embalms them in archive.[26]

As is well known, the lifeline of song cultures (in communities before literacy) is its reproducible transference; it is the repeated rendition of the vocalic, acoustic

[26] Ong (1988) stands out even to this day as the most outstanding figure on oral traditions. His "literacy thesis" (which denies logical cognitive thought among the non-literate) has no familiarity with mnemocultures of India; see Goody (1987) for an ill-informed Chap. 4 on the Vedic mnemocultures, pp. 110–22. A similar kind of uninformed claim is made in an otherwise admirable work of Dennis Tedlock. In his *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (1983), contending the ethnocentric view about the universality of epic poetry, Tedlock argues that literate societies alone can produce metrical epic—"the genre we have enshrined as the quintessence of oral poetry, was born within writing, literature indeed". For Tedlock, non-literate societies disclose "no metrical verse at all in the absence of direct influence on alphabetic, or syllabic written traditions". Tedlock seems to believe that grammaticization is the result of literacy. Tedlock's contention about the non-universality of the epic can be justified from the Sanskritic traditions. For almost two millennia after the spread of Sanskrit compositional forms, one notices the coming forth of *kavya*s and *itihasa*s (which are dubbed as epics by the Indological scholarship). However, it is a well-known fact that for over a millennium Sanskrit compositions (especially the Vedas) were composed and transmitted (for millennia) without literacy. Tedlock's work does not seem to be familiar with this atypical Sanskrit mnemocultural formations (Tedlock 1983, p. 250).

genres across periods, beyond the disappearance of "original" composers and audiences that constitutes mnemocultures (let's recall the centuries long Vaisnava, Shaiva, Dasa, Lingayata, Varkari, Devi and other innumerable recitational traditions that live on in the absence of their original composers and performers.) If the oral-gestural compositions can be repeated or reiterated and made legible across periods, they can also be shown to exist beyond the governing intentions or agents (if there were any) of their production. Innumerable examples can be cited from Indic context (as much as from any other, perhaps) to show the unmistakable legibility of events and entities (cultural texts, semiotic entities such as dance, temple architecture etc.) whose contexts of production, the original objectives and their (supposedly) determined audiences have long past disappeared.[27] That the compositions move beyond the context of their emergence and become legible is made ironically eloquent in ethnographers' and folklorists' very accounts about the (allegedly) deeply context-bound nature of speech genres.

Every ethnographer or folklorist who repeats the convention declaring that the oral world as closed and as a world transparent only to the determined members of that community unconsciously denies this very assertion in the process of exploring this world. That is, surely the anthropologist, say Haimendorf or Margaret Egnor or folklorist like Verrier Elwin or Stuart Blackburn is not the determined member of that allegedly closed world? Similarly, no German or French Indologist was the intended addressee of any of the Vedic or vernacular compositions? Yet, the mnemocultural world becomes not only accessible but appropriable to them. If their efforts make the song lines and speech genres of that world legible not only to themselves but to others—then, surely the "oral" world is not beyond the logic of translational or transcitational reproduction? Surely speech genres or gestural compositions can travel beyond their determined contexts of production and reception? Otherwise, how can one begin to explain South Asianist folklorism in European and Anglo-American world? That is, every composition whether verbal or visual is, from the very moment of its emergence, exposed to the destiny of its drift across its "original" provenance. As translatability is inherent to compositions and texts, trans-citability (transcending the context of origin) is the structural possibility of any sign or syntagm, code or choreograph.[28]

Mnemocutural song-texts or song-cultures, especially when they are of non-European origin, have attracted mainly anthropological (including ethnomusicological) attention. In the Indian context, either a Haimendorf or an Elwin remains the authority even today on the so-called cultures without writing or literacy

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[27] This is precisely the kind of cultural material—faded soundscapes—that Gary Tomlinson (2007) immerses himself in his admirable book on Mesoamerican song cultures. Although his work does not fall prey to "literacy thesis" it is entirely built on the basis of inscriptions (alphabetic and non-alphabetic). These mnemocultures differ significantly from the "lively archives" of Indian (and Asian) cultures of memory.

[28] On the inherent possibility of translation, cf. Walter Benjamin (1992, pp. 70–82). On the structure of iterability, cf. Derrida (1982, pp. 301–330). Also, cf. Samuel Weber (2008, pp. 53–94). We shall return to the thematic of translation more elaborately later in Chap. 8.

(Furer-Haimendorf and Furer-Haimendorf 1979; Elwin 1946). Paul Zumthor in his vehement critique of approaches to "oral poetry" specifies ethnography, sociology, linguistics and folkloristics for skewing passages to respond to creative life outside literacy. For these disciplines the "oral world" is perennially distanced spatially and temporally from their own moment and locations of study; that is, they are structurally and essentially distanced from such a world.

Literary criticism with its basis in literate cultures either ignored or disdained oral cultures, especially after the 18th century. "What is meant here by 'literary'", arraigns Zumthor, "is the full resonance of connotations developed over the past two centuries in reference to an Institution, to a system of specialized, ethnocentric, and culturally imperialistic values". Even as such an institution was being brought forth at the end of the 18th century (in Germany) by assembling for its consolidation philosophy, history and linguistics, "oral" literature flew in the face of such Institution, argues Zumthor (1990, p. 16).[29] Gayatri Spivak describes the literary institution's foreclosure of oral cultures as a scandal (Spivak 2003, p. 81).[30] And a discipline such as psychoanalysis with its urban, metropolitan locationality and its path of methodological individualism, and above all, despite its deepest investment in oral recounting (and its promise of "talking cure"), it appears, has little to transact with mnemocultures.

Here it must be once again pointed out that the terms and disciplinary categories of "folk" and "folklore" are very much the symptomatic instantiations of the alphabetic (or literate) mindset that, drawing on classical resources (sedimented binary of speech and writing), objectifies and distances the work of performative and song cultures. Every work of folklore is destined to consolidate and vindicate the culture of alphabetic literacy and reinforces and spreads the archival-institutional mechanics.

Analyses of song-cultures or speech communities provide symptomatic instances for unravelling civilizational urges or nostalgic agonies. Although anthropologists and folklorists, linguists and historians have repeatedly asserted the distinction and distance of writing from orality on the lines enumerated above,

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[29] Although Zumthor's book is an exceptional work of intellect and passion, it must be pointed out that his effort to turn attention to oral cultures is largely shaped by Ong's "secondary orality" (where technology of writing already impacts the oral world). That is why he cannot imagine a world of "primary orality" and his work does not attend to the continued existence of such "worlds"—worlds which have sustained themselves in their "non-literate" modes of transmitting non-literate heritages. Zumthor is unaware of the powerful work of Frits Staal on the Sanskrit tradition. Cf. Staal (1996, Part IV, pp. 349–454).

[30] Here Spivak is more specifically describing the "scandal of comparative literature" that focuses only on European nations ignoring marginalized cultures (Hispanic, African). More particularly she is here alluding to the predicament of the postcolonial intellectual caught in European comparative literary cultures and distanced from accessing the orality of the First Nations. She writes elsewhere about the epistemic disjuncture that divides the subaltern communities of the First Nations and the upwardly, made-over postcolonial subject. Cf. Spivak (2008, p. 15). Yet, as a radical thinker and affirmative deconstructionist, Spivak does not hide behind "historical alibi": "I mention my shortcoming in hope" (Spivak 2003, p. 81).

it is difficult to avoid the question whether the mnemocultural genres of communities before writing too are not determined by the very conditions garnered for the identification of writing so far.

The point to be considered here is not to be confused with some nostalgic and romantic agony for the lost worlds of peasantry. The inexorable movement of life trammels over and transforms modes of living and going about in the world. Yet access to these transformations is neither uniform nor universal. More importantly, despite the onslaught of change, deeper tectonic currents of living on in the world with others continue to nurture reflective and imaginative articulations of existence. The discarded and denigrated, marginalized and suppressed articulations, those casualties of the march of history, might (if cared for) intimate us with other rhythms of going about in the world. Mnemocultures, whether of Greek or Judaic antiquity or of the "contemporary" fourth world (or First Nation of aboriginal and nomadic *jati*s), with their displaced modes and forms of speech and gesture, song and performance, visual and verbal compositions, might contribute to an epistemic comparative force. Such a force can help us unravel the structures of violence that drive understanding of and participation in the world today. Mnemocultures impel us to unravel the epistemic violence of alphabetic literacy and its conceptual and institutional hegemony. The creative and reflective articulations of mnemocultures impel us (caught within the metaphysics of literacy) to invent, beyond the archival repositories, newer modes responding to these articulations.

Archontic passions—the urge to capture the evidential essence in material objects—institutionally govern knowledge production in mnemotechnological world. They seek a genetic relation between context and reflective compositions, or thinking and the objective world; in the idiom of Derrida, such passions institutionalize models of reading which seek linear relation among "signatures" (determinable agency), "event" (unprecedented occurrence) and "context" (decisive cause). Indological work in the last two centuries feverishly deployed such models to represent India. These invasive readings ransacked mnemocultural compositions to determine linear relations between texts and contexts. The fact that these compositions frustrated the Indologists for centuries did not deter them from imposing their models. The next chapter offers an account of the encounter between Sanskrit reflective traditions and Indological interpretations of it. Drawing on the reflections of mnemocutlural modes of articulating memory, an attempt is made to figure cultural difference through the reasoning imagination at work in the Sanskrit "literary inquiries".

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Part II
Mnemotexts of Reflection

Chapter 4
Learning in the Double Bind: Mnemotextual Inquiries and Action Knowledges

Abstract Plato's legacy continues to persist in discussions concerning the relation between art/literature and philosophy. This chapter examines whether such a legacy or the modern rearticulation of it in German thought is of any relevance in the context of centuries long Sanskrit "literary inquiries." While exploring the mnemotexts of Sanskrit traditions, this chapter focuses on the work of Rajasekhara and other Lakshanikas. Derrida's historical-theoretical conceptions of the literary are probed further in this context.

Keywords The literary · Alamkarikas · German romanticism · Patocka · Action knowledge

> Thirst for knowledge and greed for explanation never lead to a thinking inquiry. Curiosity is always the concealed arrogance of a self-consciousness that banks on a self-invented *ratio* and its rationality. The *will* to know does not *will* to abide in hope before what is worthy of thought.
>
> Heidegger (1982, p. 13, emphasis in original).

If the Greek antiquity distinguished Europe through inscriptional, representational mnemotechniques, and inaugurated meta-positional theoretical discursive processes, the Judaic heritage offered Europe its mosaic distinction—the Jewish normative past—the suffering children chosen by the god—and inculcated a critical comparative or contrastive impulse. Inheriting from these pagan and Judaic heritages, Christianity consolidated and institutionalized the translational, comparativist and critical hermeneutical domains (in the post-Lutheran epoch). As the civilization of the Book, Christianity universalized these discursive forms, and institutionalized them across the earth through colonial violence. In a way colonialism is a colossal translational, comparativist and epistemo-critical pedagogical project. It aims at permanently altering the heterogeneous modes of being in the world through a normative discursive order.

Caught in the destitute postcolonial times, one must risk and struggle to reconfigure and rearticulate the resources of the past—resources which are already

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subjected to the epistemic violence of colonial project. While caught within the chiasmic discursive and institutional grids that the Jew-Greek-Christian heritage has implanted everywhere, one must struggle persistently to be outside—in these structures as one puts them to work.

4.1 The Ear of the Other

The Vedic acoustic episteme embodies a compositional practice which neither has an antecedent nor is it regulated by any originary myth. It comes forth as a mnemocultural event and proliferates with infinite referrals or citations, weavings that are impossible to exhaust. Indeed (to recall Derrida's idiom) there is nothing outside this intricate weave of Vedic textlooms in Sanskrit reflective traditions. And precisely it is for this lack or utter disregard for the outside—the index to an alleged referential reality—this episteme has attracted or repulsed two centuries of European knowledge towards India. This European response of exposing the lack, purveying the absent, foregrounding the real referent—above all, in defining the context—this response not only consolidated a European difference, it also instituted a paradigm of reading, of identifying and relating the text to context. In a word, this European response defined a European responsibility towards cultures that "cannot" represent themselves. If the Orientalist scholarship indulged in exposing the lack of history in Indic traditions, postcolonial academy continues to be haunted by this very thematic (cf. *Representations* 1992). If the Orientalist erudition denied rational logical reflection to cultures (allegedly) steeped in myth, ritual and non-rational (mystical), postcolonial scholars continue to shore up rational systems of Indic traditions.[1]

As we have shown in the earlier chapter, thematics of history and rationality derive from the grand narrative of European heritage. The fact that such a narrative suffered challenges in the recent times from within the European tradition has little bearing on the discourses of Indology and South Asian studies. That these discourses continue to guard the received protocols of reading goes to prove the tenacity of sedimented European conventions of reading other cultures. In other words, the modernity of the genetic-linear and referential reading modes has only reconfirmed a classical ideological concept of context; and such reading modes raided the mnemotextual compositions of Sanskrit traditions to determine their contexts (or lack of them). Here one can point to the wind and fury of the debates

[1] The concerted effort to retrieve and project a "philosophy of rationality" in Indian reflective traditions dominated the work of Matilal and Mohanty and it continues to figure in the recent work of Jonardon Ganeri. Just to cite a few from a whole range of works: Matilal (1968, 1971, 1986); Mohanty (1992); Ganeri (1999, 2001).

on the Indo-Eurasia website in the last few years.[2] These debates have remained ignorant of or impervious to Derrida's critique of phonocentric concept of writing and continue to deploy this concept in declaring societies as illiterate. Instead of repeating the usual critique of Indological and Orientalist constructions, I try to explore in the rest of this work two related issues. First, to reconfigure European representations of India as emerging from the lithic heritage with its specifically devised protocols of providing explanatory accounts of the world—which can be called classical readings in their filiation of text and context. Consequently, it is contended, these readings provide *European* experiences of India. Given the differential articulations of memory discussed earlier, the second issue that I shall take up concerns mnemocultural modes of response to what they receive.

4.2 Literary Inquiries

One of the striking features of Indian reflective traditions is that, even after they are exposed to the lithic technology of writing, they do not work with a concept of text as a coherent unity with a central or essential thematic; they proliferate as mnemotexts. Literary inquires[3] from Bhamaha to Jagannatha and beyond, inquires into plastic and pictorial visual forms from *Chitrasutra* and *Chitralakshana* to *Shilpaprakasha* and beyond neither thematize any text as a whole nor offer an analysis of any presumed core of a text.

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[2] Here I am referring to the web group developed by Michael Witzel, George Thompson and Steven Farmer (moderated by Farmer). One of the crucial themes discussed by the members (especially Witzel and Farmer) in the group concerns the status of Indus Valley seals: Was Indus Valley a "literate" civilization? Their "provocative" declaration is that the seals (which are in fact uncontestable instances of graphematic marks, inscriptions on a substrate), in accordance with the "prevailing" theories of writing, cannot be considered signs of literacy (Farmer et al. 2004). With this thesis this trio has challenged anyone to disprove their argument and offered a reward for the winner: "How confident are we that Indus symbols were not part of a 'writing system', as assumed for over 130 years? See the $10,000 prize offer my collaborators and I have made to 'Indus script' adherents." Based on computational and neurobiological models, members of this group (Steven Farmer and others) have offered to decipher textual compositional structures of ancient civilizations. See Farmer et al. (2000, 2002). All these debates can be found on the website: Indo-Eurasian_Research List. See the Research List Overview at http://www.safarmer.com/Indo-Eurasian.html.See also http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Indo-Eurasian_research/.

What is amazing about this "debate" about the status of Indus seals is that it is regulated firmly by the phonocentric (which assumes a linear relation between phonetic sound (*phoné*) and graphical mark) dogma. Needless to say that this debate, its premises and its orientation are fundamentally rooted in the lithic-prosthetic paradigm that we have been discussing in this work.

[3] By literary inquiries, I refer to the traditions of inquiry into the literary (*kavya*, *sarasvata*) that emerged and proliferated over a millennium from 8th century; drawing on the already extended forms of inquiry into language, utterance, ritual, astral science, and logic, these inquiries were initiated by a group of poet-thinkers called Lakshanikas or Alamkarikas (from Bhamaha to Jagannatha Pandita and beyond).

In the Indic mnemotextual practices two deeply related features could be identified. One of these is thematized or consciously formulated in the composition and the other is performed in the act of composition. In other words, the compositions enact what they reflect upon and recount in the very form of their emergence. The mnemotext often thematizes the impossibility of grasping and recounting the heritage in its totality. The *Chitrasutra*,[4] for example, often points out that it can only succinctly, briefly, in a nutshell, provide what the inexhaustible heritage offers. What gets lucidly thematized is that the text in a composition, while drawing on the resources of the past (other texts, other utterances) cannot hope to totalize the resources for a complete grasp over them. Similarly, Rajasekhara[5] too sees his own task as condensation of what earlier sages (like Markandeya) have elaborately formulated (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 4).

Yayavariyah samkshipya muninam matavistaram
Vyakarot kavyamimamsam kavibhyo Rajasekharaha.

(Grasping from the enormously spread systems of understanding, Rajasekhara of the Yayavariyas, succinctly composes *Kavyamimamsa* (inquiry into the literary) for the purpose of poets [Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 1–3]).[6]

Yet the mnemotextual reflective compositions here profusely allude to, cite, elliptically refer to other compositions and enumerate specific features relevant to the context. These compositions like the material formats (*grantha*s, *pothi*s) in which they are recorded subsequently emerge more as assemblages of reflective and imaginative weavings than any coherent unities with a linear orientation. At the most, a perennially shape-changing thread—*sutra*—holds the assemblage, and in turn is effected by the elements of assemblage (thus there is no unified use of the *sutra* form. From Panini to *Chitrasutra* the form itself is dynamically reconfigured or transfigured in use).

Embodying inheritances, repeating the received variously and above all explicit acknowledgement of the reception are the constitutive textual protocols of the

[4] This is a composition of primal significance in the context of the visual "arts" of India—a text celebrated as the encyclopedia of Indian painting—the *Chitrasutra* (Aphorisms of the Visual) is—more specifically, the third *khanda* (part) of the massive *Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapurana*. The text of *Sri Vishnudharmottara* that I have used in this work is a Telugu redaction with commentary. Summaries of the *sutra*s in English provided in the text are based on the Telugu *tatparya*s (gist) and commentary (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988). Unless mentioned otherwise, all references are to this edition of the text. In addition to the Telugu text I have closely followed two other (incomplete) translations of the *Sri Vishnudharmottara* by Stella Kramrisch (1928/1993) and *The Chitrasutra* by Parul Dave Mukherjee (2001).

[5] This is a composition of strategic significance in the literary reflective inquiries of the Sanskrit tradition –The text of the *Kavyamimamsa* that I have depended on in this work is from a Telugu redaction of the Sanskrit text with commentary. Cf. Rajasekhara (2003).

[6] What is extant today as *Kavyamimansa* appears to be only the first of the 18 *adhikarana*s ("parts") of a composition imparted to various savants by the son of the goddess Saraswati—Kavyapurusha. Each of these learned sages in turn is said to have composed an *adhikarana* on various aspects of *kavya*. Rajasekhara discloses that he is most economically assembling only some significant aspects of such variedly composed compendium.

Indic mnemotextual compositions. Such a practice remains undisturbed from say, the *Shatapatha Brahmana* to the oral writings of Gaddar[7] today. Quite often, the compositional form of these receptions, their generic depth and reach are explicitly formulated and are made a part of the specific text under composition. Thus for example the textual form of the *sutra* and its generic features are clearly defined in a text like the *Chitrasutra*—a text that is itself composed in the *sutra* form.

> *Alpaksharam asandigdham saravad vishwatomukham*
> *Astobham anavadyan cha sutram sutra vidoh viduh*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 10)

> (Composed of limited letters and words, unambiguous and without an occasion for doubt, that which captures the essence of the *shastra*s, and enables the grasp of all the *shastric* issues, provides the possibility of its adoption universally, dynamic and without defects—such a rigorous form of verbal composition is the *sutra*.)

This absence of linear progression or an evolving content can be noticed in any of the compositions of the literary inquiry. Some compositions mention the themes that they set out to reflect upon—but do not offer any logical or thematic justification of the order. This is perhaps because the topics (such as: the ends of *kavya*, modes of making *kavya*, use and abuse of sonic and semantic tropes, worthy and unworthy compositions, styles and genres of composition, above all, the essence of *kavya*, etc.) they reflect upon are already much examined ones in the tradition. Each of these topics attracted divergent responses in these inquiries. Each of the inquirers composed his response in the mode he liked. Thus, Vamana composes in the *sutra* (aphoristic) form and offers his own exegesis of the *sutra*; Mammata composes his *shloka*s and provides his own commentary on the *shloka*s. Each one of these inquirers, drawing on the enormous learning that they were exposed to, forged their own distinct positions with regard to sonic-figural language of *kavya*s.

Yet, none of these works is regulated by any organic or progressive principle of composition. In other words, the composition does not erect any architectonic for the work. These compositions do not exteriorize any parergonal frame of contents. Contents are not positioned in a line but are assembled on a ground (which itself is prone to transformation). When the assembled themes are taken up for discussion, the mnemotextual literary inquiries offer citations from other compositions, tacitly allude to other texts and move on to compose their own insights or contentions. In other words, even here the technique of assemblage can be seen to be at work. Anandavardhana, for example, cites 222 *shloka*s in his work; out of which if 184 are from Sanskrit, 42 are from Prakrit. Similarly, Abhinavagupta, in his commentary on Anandavardhana (1998, "Preface", vii) cites 138 *shloka*s out of which 125 are from Sanskrit and 13 from Prakrit. Some others like Jagannatha Pandita compose their own poems as examples for an argument. But these citations and poetic-linguistic propositions do not offer any grand narrative of an evolving

[7] "Gaddar" is the cultural-political activist, composer and performer affiliated to the Maoist underground movement. His work of culture has spread across the entire country in the last four decades.

thematic. In a word, verbal compositions in Indic (here the argument is confined to the compositions in the Sanskrit tradition) do not seem to be conceived in accord with any norm of narrative linearity with a unifying beginning, middle and an end.

If the enormity of the heritage cannot be totalized for representation, it can only be captured allusively and elliptically. As discussed earlier, allusion and ellipsis are the powerful compositional threads of mnemotexts. For example throughout the text of *Kavyamimamsa*, Rajasekhara demonstrates exceptional awareness and grasp of the divergent resources of the tradition [all the 12 + 4 *shastra*s, the various linguistic formulations and their respective literary heritages, the distinctive passions and competencies of the tongue in various regions are brought into his composition (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 95–96)]. But this comprehensive grasp of the resources is never demonstrated "historically", substantially or even chronologically. The pertinent resources of the past are brought forth contextually—but allusively, elliptically and indeed citationally. The *Kavyamimamsa* is a citational composition par excellence.

Thus, in order to comment on the poetic creation based on the Vedic resources Rajasekhara simply utters.

> *Tatra shrautaha—"Urvashi hapsarah pururavasamaidam chakame"*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 96).

Now, this allusive tag "*tatra shrautaha*" (*thus* in the *shrauta*—the recited composition) is in fact a reference to the *Shatapatha Brahmana.* The tag alludes in the most condensed form to an event, an account which can be called a narrateme (this node will be discussed more elaborately later.) This allusion or elliptical tag fires another verse composition in the text of *Kavyamimamsa*. Immediately another allusion zooms the textual link to an Upanishadic text where the latter itself is alluding or referring to the utterances of the Veda and the effulgence of the Vedic formulations (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 96–97). The weave of the literary inquiry thickens and expands through such compositional fibres.

Further, Rajasekhara offers copious testimonies to each of the poetic reference or category he alludes to. These testimonies are wrenched from across the entire textual heritage (Vaidic, Jain, and Buddhist resources and Sanskrit and Apabhramsha languages) and are woven into this allusive paradigm. Rajasekhara is acutely aware of the principle of graft and citation. He devotes an entire chapter (called, it must be noted, "*shabdaharanam*") elaborating on the types and nature of poetic grafting and reception—with a stunning declaration about commonality between poetry and theft.

> *Nastya chouraha kavijano nastya chauro vanigjanaha*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 171)
>
> (As in the trade so in poetry says Rajasekhara. There is no trader who does not steal—and there is no poet who has not stolen/received from others.)

One only should know how to dissimulate the graft or what is stolen, declares Rajasekhara. For Rajasekhara the one who can see the unseen in the received, the one who grasps the "new" in the ancient is the great poet. In this kind of reception of and tacit response to the heritage, Rajasekhara has had celebrated predecessors.

Already, nearly two centuries before Rajasekhara, the poet-rhetorician Bhamaha proclaims (in *Kavyalamkara*) that there is nothing that is outside the poet's grasp and the poet's burden.

Na sa shabdo na tadvachyam na sa nyayo na sa kala
Jayate yanna kavyajna mahabharo mahan kaveh[8]

(There is no sound, no expression, no logic, no "art" that a *kavi* cannot not know. What a burden the poet has to carry!)

But Bhamaha's own composition here is yet again a repetition with a supplementation. For Bhamaha was really receiving the much older celebrated text incrementally. Bhamaha's text is surely an allusion to Bharata's *Natyasastra* which privileges the visual arts.

Na tad jnanam na tatchchilpam na sa vidya na sa kala
Na sau yogo na tatkarma natyesmin yanna drushyate

(No knowledge, form, wisdom, art, yoga, ritual-act exists which cannot be shown in the dance-drama/theatre.)

Textual allusions and traces recede into intractable pasts in mnemocultures.

4.3 Impossible Enumerations

Nearly half a millennium sets apart the mnemotext of *Chitrasutra* from *Kavyamimamsa*. But the mnemotextuality that forms the latter strikingly shares a certain kind of enumerative mode that could be seen in the composition of the *Chitrasutra* (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 415, 47–67, 87–88). Rajasekhara's inquiry into the literary brings forth a layered text of enumeratively differentiated themes, qualities, semantic paradigms, linguistic domains, systems of utterance, strategies of poetic composition and above all an inexhaustible heritage of divergent reflective creative weaves. What appears to be constitutively significant of this entire communicational weave of the Sanskrit formations is the enumerative principle of difference. The enumerative episteme at once registers the exhaustive pattern-formations and at the same time, acknowledges the impossibility of codification. The enumerative principle bears open the aporia between the desire for mastery and control through regulation and the impossibility of regulating the yet to come.

Just in order to feel the texture of this enumerative composition let me cite a few random elements of the weave: There are, says the composition, two types of learners (pupils) and three kinds of mental competence; two types of inspiration for poetic creation and two types of talent; three kinds of poets and four types of theorists.

[8] This and the following quotation from the *Natyashastra* are taken from *Samskrita Vyakhyana – Vimarsha Sampradayamu* (Sreeramachandrudu [nd.], pp. 22–23).

Later each of these categories is further enumeratively differentiated. Thus—of the three kinds of poets each category is further divided into some twelve sub-types—which are reclassified into other patterns. Similarly there are multiple types of stealing from other poets and different ways of rendering the available. Thus, there are five types of utterance and each one is further divided—and some of these divisions are said to proliferate infinitely. Therefore, as he comments on the inexhaustible resources of sound and utterance, Rajasekhara says.

Tadidamithakaram panchaprakaramapi padajatam mithah samanviya
Manamanantyaya kalpate…

(2003, p. 60)

(In this way when five different types of word groups mingle their number grows to infinity.)

No wonder why the learned view that even when Indra spends one thousand divine years to learn from Brahaspati he could not find the end of acoustic-verbal heaps, submits Rajasekhara (2003, Ch. 4).[9]

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[9] The *Chitrasutra* devotes several chapters in enumerating the interrelated themes and practices of dharma and *varnashrama*s, rules, relevant norms, duties, effects as per the singularity of differences of the *varna*s (biocultural formations) and *ashrama*s. In other words, only through precise and detailed descriptive enumeration of a differential system could one grapple with the radically heterogeneous (senses). This is precisely what the *Chitrasutra* accomplishes. Thus, for example, to cite just one from other innumerable instances, from the series of performative, gestural practices: There are said to be 36 types of limb movement; 108 types of orchestrating the ratio of limb combinations; 6 types of sleeping postures, 6 types of standing modes, 9 types of body positions (*asana*s), 13 types of head and 7 types of neck movements, 5 types each of waist, thigh, calf and feet postures and movements. In a close-up as it were, if we were to focus only on the face we get the series such as: 36 types of eye positions, 9 types of eye-ball movement, 6 types of neck movements, 9 types of nose-movements, 5 types of teeth positions and 7 types of lip movements. What is given above is just a fragment of an enumerative episteme. All these possible movements fractalize the body into an ever-changing mercurial gestural ensemble and reiterate the embodied articulations of mnemocultures.

The series can run from the micro level of a very tiny fractal segment (say that of the eye-lid or the tip of the nose) to a very macro level of the types of men and women (5 types) or extended types of temple structures, which take after the minutely differentiated morphology of the human body. As in the case of the *kavya*, as will be shown later, in the plastic domain as well the figure of temple is conceived on the basis of the body. Every fractal segment and the larger whole are distinctly named in the text of the *Chitrasutra*. Like the fractal element, it can only be a simulacral existent. Every existent and its being in the universe must be endlessly recounted. The mode specifies, demarcates and enumerates the unending series. The enumerative mode is a bit like the map of the world in the Borges story: it spreads across the entire geography it represents; its scale is the scale of which it maps. (Yet, unlike in Borges' story, neither the universe nor the fractilic accounts of it is exhaustible here.) Every form, human and the non-human, organic and inorganic, flora and fauna, can in principle are covered in this mode. The mode cannot totalize, unify the universe in its representation. Like the fractal element, it can only be a simulacral existent.

Krutsam tato vaktumashakyamisha.

Every existent and its being in the universe must be endlessly recounted. The mode specifies, demarcates and enumerates the unending series. Only in a condensed form one can recount these gestural expressions. For, as the gestures of dance come forth as parallel to the actions of the

4.4 Suspended Aggregations

From the earliest extant compositional forms of the Sanskrit tradition, we do not see any elaborately conceived narrative constructions. None of the Vedic, *sutraic*, *darshanik* and even Upanishadic compositions is woven on any narrative principle. No narrative continuously runs through any of these compositions (this thematic and its implications are elaborated in the later chapters). In fact there is no ready equivalent term in the Sanskrit language (as in the case of other many other conceptual categories) for narrative. The term *katha* (verb *katham*) merely is a plea/injunction to tell. The term is used to form a question, in the *vakovakya* (dialogue) form which would elicit answer from the interlocutor. Thus, *Chitrasutra* offers a scene of learning in a *puranic* genre. The scene of learning is often described as a *samvada*—"equal argument" (argument among equals). Vajra is not a passive listener in this *samvada*. Intrigued by the creation of plastic forms of deities (when *para*—the ungraspable alterity inside and outside every discrete form—is said to be formless), the king asks the sage Markandeya: *tasya rupam idam* ***katham***? (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 153). *Katha* is also giving an account, not necessarily fictional one.

As these literary inquiries have emerged essentially in cultural formations that are constituted and shaped by cultures of memory, they are of immense help to configure cultural difference; with their non-architectonic and non-narrative orientation, they give us further insight into the workings of the alithic imagination and its reasoning. Literary inquires are the inquiries *of* the literary or the creative. That is, as the ambiguous genitive ("of") suggests, these are inquiries into the literary on the one hand, and allude to what literature singularly enables us to explore and grasp on the other. In the Indian context from Bharata to Jagannatha (and beyond—up to Viswanatha Satyanarayana) these inquiries proliferated vigorously.

Although the terms *kavya* and *kala*, for instance, in the Sanskrit reflective traditions can be traced back to the earliest periods of antiquity, their distinction and demarcation as singular forms of verbal and visual compositions or creations of metrical melodic speech forms and gestural acts cannot generically be specified. We only have so far predictable historical and philological works enumerating and recounting when and where such and such *kavi*s, *kavya*s and *kala*s have emerged.[10] We hardly come across any kind of theoretical inquiry into the absence of such

(Footnote 9 continued)
universe, such modes cannot be recounted without remainders (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 87–88)

[10] The most comprehensive but largely determined by Indological origin and location-seeking work in this area is P.V. Kane's *History of Sanskrit Poetics* Kane (1971/2002).

differentiated generic status to the compositions of *kavi* on the one hand and the emergence of the artifactual category called *kala*, in the early antiquity when these cultural compositions were forged. What does their emergence signify? Do these forms imply a turn if not a rupture (which Sheldon Pollock often searches for) within the reflective practices of the Sanskrit tradition? What status do these forms have within the tradition? We hardly get any sustained inquiry into these areas of questioning.

We do, however, have a sustained, challenging tradition of inquiry into the literary which traces its resources to the same period that brought forth the generic singularities of *kavya* and *kala*. For over a thousand years—until the verge of colonial epoch—one can track a vibrant, rigorous and formidable tradition of inquiry into the literary that has flourished in many parts of India (most singularly in Kashmir). The poet-thinkers of this tradition showed and emphasized that a *kavya* can say just everything and that it is composed without restrictions, with no prescribed normative laws, independently, but offers pleasure with the ensemble of nine *rasa*s (flavours); they differentiated *kavya* from all other flourishing discourses—discourses that staked so far claims over the Vedic tradition (*shadanga*—six "limbs"/parts); unhesitatingly they drew on them, ridiculed them at times, and ventured to offer their own poetic-reflective accounts.

In fact, Rajasekhara went on to declare the *kavya* learning (*kavyavidya*) as the seventh *anga* of the Veda (2003, pp. 5–6).[11] Crucially, they avoided non-linguistic categories (historical, philological, referential-sociological) in their inquiries into the literary. Even though this implies a continuous reflective impulse concerning the uses of language (prominently as sonorous-melodic element—*shabda*) among these inquiries, the critical-cognitive status of these inquiries remains barely explored. These were all *kavi*s who were already rigorously learned among the "six limbs" of the Veda (mentioned earlier) and were committed to bringing forth a distinct knowledge of the literary through their inquiries.

Yet, what they were doing should not be confused with what emerged in German Romanticism as "Criticism". They were more concerned with how the literary can be achieved and where and how it fails. Their reflective inquiries took two subtly related forms (i) in foregrounding the conditions and modes of the emergence of the literary; this took the reflective-creative form of the *shastra* which provided a singularly distinct epistemological opening for conceiving the literary. (ii) But such *shastra* (unlike in the case of German Romanticism) did not await the creative work that ideally realized the formulations of the *shastra*. For these inquirers (like Anandavardhana, Rajasekhara, Jagannatha and others) were themselves accomplished poets. Their inquiries into and formulations of the

[11] *"'Shiksha, kalpo, vyakaranam, niruktam, chandovichitih, jyotisham cha shadangani' ityacharyah. 'upakarakatva dalamkarah saptamamgam.' Iti Yayavariyah."* (Sciences of utterance, ritual, *vyakarana*, etymology, metrics, and astrology are reckoned as the six limbs of the Veda by the Acharyas. As it enables one to grasp the meaning of the Veda, Yayavariya regards Alamkarashastra as the seventh limb (of the Veda). He goes on to claim that without the knowledge of this figural science one can't even access the meaning of the Vedas.

literary were assimilated, put to work and improvised upon by generations of poets over millennia (Mammata 1995, pp. 12–13).[12]

Yet, nowhere do these inquirers indulge in a thematization or interpretative venture in treating any *kavya* as a whole. No single *kavya* in its totality serves as an object of analysis to prove any thesis in these inquiries. Countless numbers of citations from other *kavya*s compose their works; but these citations are invariably context-sensitive and fragmentary. "Criticism" as it is forged in the re-conceptualization of literature in German Romanticism[13] has no place in these literary inquiries. Their work of reasoning imagination (of inquiries and compositions—literary as well as reflective) makes such a discourse superfluous.

The poet-inquirers of the Sanskrit tradition always thought that the burden and the scope of poetry were illimitable, that no domain of the world or *vangmaya* was alien to them. These traditions of literary inquiry—with their open, jealous, and complicitous relation with the Vedic Sanskrit tradition have deeply affected the literary traditions across all major Indian languages.[14] It is difficult to specify a literary inquiry (let alone a more general reflective tradition), as will be shown later, in any of the Indian languages that is outside the epistemic embrace of this tradition. Neither the literary genre called *kavya* nor literary inquiries of the poet-thinkers emerge as a result of any "crisis" or rupture of thought as it is contended in the case of European intellectual history (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988, pp. 27–38, 59–78; Lacoue-Labarthe 1993a, pp. 1–13, 143–157).

[12] The well-known story of Sri Harsha comes to mind here. This renowned poet and thinker gave his celebrated *kavya Naishadha* to his maternal uncle—the redoubtable Mammata. The latter apparently commented that if only he had received it before his own composition of *Kavyaprakasha*, it would have spared him from the burden of searching for examples of maladies of poetic composition from other sources. Commentators conclude that the reputation that *Naishadha* had achieved among Kashmir poets could have been the result of revising the *kavya* after Mammata's comments. It must be mentioned in passing that Sri Harsha also composed the most rigorous reflective-polemical work of Vedanta titled *Khandanakhandakhadya*.

[13] The invocation of German Romanticism here is mainly due to the enduring power of this conception even in contemporary accounts of literature. It is this early Romantic thought (at the turn of 18th century) that gets institutionalized in all the conceptions of the literary. Therefore, a thread of comparative-contrastive account with this thought will continue to move in this work (cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988, pp. 101–120).

[14] Nurtured in European cultural heritage, which works with canonical orders and texts, and with categorically differentiated domains of literary and philosophical works, Pollock wishes to emphasize the Alamkarikas' difference by pointing out that these "theorists" work without a core canonical text unlike the *shastrakara*s for whom the Veda is a canonical authority. Leaving aside the dubious claim about the "canonical" status of the Veda (which one in the 1,131 versions of the Vedas?), a claim essentially generated by Indological community, it is impossible to sustain the idea that the literary inquiries (of the Alamkarikas or Lakshanikas) functioned outside the cognitive-performative frames generated by the Vedic heritage. All the major inquirers make it mandatory for every poet to be cultivated in not just the *shruti*, *smruti* but even the *anga*s (that is, *shastra*s oriented to explicate or offer exegesis on the Vedas). Above all, these inquirers indeed configured their work as a *shastra*—something that belonged to the order of reflective-creative tradition: hence the domain name of Alamkarashastra (cf. Pollock 2002, p. 433).

Contemporary Sanskrit pandits like Pullela Sreeramachandrudu point out that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to separate and categorically divide something uniquely called *kavya* or (recited or sung) poem from other forms of composition in Sanskrit *vangmaya/sarasvata*. All the attributes figured as peculiar to *kavya* (such as unique style of composition of the word, sentence, a construction which is beneficial to the world) could easily be found in the RgVedic compositions too, argues Sreeramachandrudu (2002, p. 346). Therefore, *kavya* does not get defined on the basis of its size, its themes, its relation to reality or referent, or its figural symmetry.

No generic definition can constrict the force of *kavya*. In other words, although the poetic utterance (*kavya*) comes forth on the basis of conventions and conditions, the literary seems to emerge as if free of all conventions and determinations, pointed out Mammata. *Kavya, in other words, may not be a genre at all*. It is the instantiation or *prayoga* (reflective praxis) of polyvalent and heterogeneous weavings of language which defy generic determinations. Unlike in the West, these extended inquiries never offered a definitive closure to the *prayoga* (putting to work) called the literary; it is impossible to come across a normative conceptualization of the literary (*kavya*) in the Indic reflective traditions.

4.5 The Literary Secrecy

Rajasekhara's *Kavyamimamsa* apparently does not have a metaphysical category as the originary source as it is in the case of the *Chitrasutra*. Yet, he figures the literary (*kavya*) as the most unfathomable and inexhaustible but non-transcendental secrecy or crypt.

> *Saraswatam kimapi tatsu maha rahasyam*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 30)

(The nature of the literary is an indescribable secret crypt of great magnitude.)

Learning, cultivation, the perennial flow of *vangmaya* all are necessary but cannot guarantee the access to the enigmatic secrecy of the literary. Rajasekhara specifies the sources of the literary or the resources of literary creation as *kavyarthayoni*s (literally, vaginas of poetic meaning—16 in number [2003, pp. 95–96]) and spells out the gendered genetic sources of the literary (*kavya* has eight mothers [2003, p. 136]) But Rajasekhara is more inclined to view the enigma of the literary as *ab-original*. The literary, for Rajasekhara, cannot be reduced to these parental determinations. Both the sense of sight and the source of emergence, the eye and the *yoni* (vagina), are suspended as the modes of grasping the enigma of the literary.

Rajasekhara's tropology here is stunning. The eye is the most commonplace source for representing reality and the *yoni* the most conventional figure for identifying the genetic or generative origin; both are the paradigmatic figures of proliferation. Both the figures, of the eye and the *yoni* are the most sedimented

sources for interpreting religious and erotic revelation and for foregrounding law (truth of revelation) and punishment (curse). Although Rajasekhara is acutely sensitive to the received resources of learning (which must be gained through rigorous practice, *abhyasa*), the enigmatic *saraswatanetram* (the eye of the literary) is discontinuous with the received sources of sight and (pro)creation in his work.

Rajasekhara clearly distinguishes the *saraswatanetram* from *vangmayanetram* (the eye of verbal universe of the *shastra*s) of the discursive poet or the master of the aural (heritage) (*shrutighana*). Why is it, asks Rajasekhara, that the legislators of utterance and meaning (*sabdarthashasanavidu*s) do not "say" (*kati*) poetry? This is so, he says, because the eye of the verbal universe (*vangmayanetram*) of these masters, who made exceptional study of the discourses, will only shine brightly. But only the one whose utterance has novelty of material (*vastuvu*), he alone can excel among the creators of truly literary works. His utterances are pure and respectable.

Shabdartha shasanavidah kati no kavante
yadvangmayam shrutighanasya chakasti chakshuh
kintvasti yadvachasi vastu navam sadukti
sandarbhinam sa dhuri tasya girah pavitrah

(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 212)

But the novelty does not necessarily always emerge only from new material. It could also come from the unconventional forms of receiving what is already available.

Shabdarthoktish: yah pashyediha kinchana nutanam
Ullikhetkinchana prachyam manyatam sa mahakavih

(2003, p. 172)

(The one who can discern something new in utterance, meaning, and practice, the one who can figure ancient motifs commendably—he must be received as a great poet.)

In his utterances concerning novelty and the literary Rajasekhara boldly declares that the "poet's praxis" (*kavisamaya*) is that in which poets compose what is against the normative (*ashastriya*) and even commonly unacceptable—but something that is continually received.

Ashastriyam alaukikam cha paramparayatam
Yamartham upanibadhnanti kavayah sa kavisamayah

(2003, p. 212)

(Traditionally received imports which could be counter-discursive, contra-worldly, but poets (who) compose their *kavya*s with them signify *kavisamaya*).

Literally, *kavisamaya* means the poet's time; it also has other connotations such as poet's pledge, poet's arrangement, opportunity, or poet's chance. Rajasekhara is the first poet-thinker to deal elaborately with *kavisamaya.*

Kavisamaya shabdashchayam mulam
apashyadbhih prayukto rudhashcha

(2003, p. 213)

(Something that gets established without reference to any source, but only through poet's experiment is *kavisamaya.*)

What is remarkable about *Kavyamimamsa* is that throughout the text, Rajasekhara considers the literary as **the** source for grasping, discerning and forging newness.

Differing sharply from the learned predecessors who found it impossible to grasp the unknown, the new, in a language and heritage that is trodden by great poets from antiquity, Rajasekhara declares in his chapter on grafting and receiving the available.

Asamsaramudaraih kavibhih pratidina gruhita saropi
Adyapya bhinna mudro vibhati vacham parispandah

(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 172)

The great poets overuse the river of language and it even contains the spirit of their everyday grasp; yet it remains unmarked, replete with potential for other uses. But such potential cannot be tapped through the commonplace practices and perceptions. It requires the eye of the literary which with its singular intensity, inaccessible to the word and mind, can distinguish the visible from the unknown and the invisible. The vulgar sight—the perceptual eye cannot accomplish this; the one who is not a great poet remains blind even if he can physically see. Whereas the great poet remains congenitally blind to those meanings that are already revealed by predecessors.

Anya drushta charehyarthe mahakavayo
jatyandhastad viparite tu divya drushaha

(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 173)

(Although the poets are also endowed with the vulgar senses (*charmachkshusopi kavayha)* what they see cannot be seen even by Shiva with his three eyes and Indra with his thousand eyes.)

Shiva's cyclopic eye and Indra's thousand eyes: the tradition's most recognized tropes of the erotic and the visual, of incest and transgression, desire and betrayal. The vulgar figure of sight and the conventional motif of creation are remarkably united here in the thousand-eyed Indra figure. These eyes, as is well known, are penile substitutes for his incestuous betrayal; these eyes dissimulate the thousand *yoni*s on his accursed body. Similarly, Shiva's third eye is also the result of a maternal betrayal, precisely in an incestuous context, through a deceitful seizure of maternal erotic force.[15] The figure of the eye and the motif of erotic desire are

[15] *Jambapurana* is one of the several *purana*s narrated and performed by the Dakkalis of Telangana. The Dakkalis are among the lower rungs of the heavily graded "scheduled caste" community (the Madigas). The Dakkalis claim inheritance of a manuscript tradition and display the use of palm leaves. Their performances often use scroll paintings of mythological scenes. Cf. Rao (1998, p. 55). More about this *purana* can be seen in the last chapter of this work.

carefully run together here. For Rajasekhara the new, the unknown and the enigmatic secret of the literary cannot be accessed through these available figures and motifs—through these resources of the senses. The sources of its origination, where exactly the new emerges from, the topos of the unknown, remain absolutely indeterminable. Blindness seems the condition of insight into them.

In enumerating the types of poetic graft or poetic reception of the available, Rajasekhara distinguishes and sets apart a particular kind of poet from all other (demarcated types of) poets. This unique poet belongs to the category named by Rajasekhara as *ayonyarthakavi* (literally the poet who creates meaning outside the *yoni*)[16]—the poet whose insights, whose creations of meaning, find no determinable origin. Their sources are *ab*-original. It is indeed a creation without precedent—it's an emergence without origins. Above all it must be remembered that for Rajasekhara, the *yoni* here is nothing less than the entire received heritage. What is being suggested here is that the *ayonarthakavi*, in his reception of the heritage, receives the unavailable from the already-there past.

No wonder Rajasekhara distinguishes him (*ayonyarthakavi*) as the touchstone—the *chintamani* (the stone that makes the diamond (of insight) shine). This poet can see the unavailable and the unknown meaning/sense—meaning unseen previously. He is the

> *Adrushtachararartha darshi*
>
> (2003, p. 178)
>
> (He is the poet who can see those meanings invisible earlier.)

In contrast to the *ayonyarthakavi,* Rajasekhara posts mimetic or imitative fancy:

> *So yam kavera kavitvadayi sarvatha*
> *Pratibimba kalpah pariharaniyaha*
>
> (2003, pp. 188–189)

As the poet would suffer the ignominy as non-poet (*akavi*), the poet must always eschew imitative creation. In contrast to all other plethora of poets, Rajasekhara

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[16] Here, one may quickly retort that after all the desire to create outside the gendered female body has been a classically recurrent male fantasy (the sectarian god Vishnu with his ascending umbilical cord holding his procreation Brahma in a lotus and Vishnu as the source of procreation in general are well known). Two points are in order here: (i) Rajasekhara explicitly denies gendered access to poetic creation. For him the character of cultivated learning is related to the self and not to any essence of man or woman.

Samskarohyatmani samavaiti

Na strainam paurusham va vibhagamapekshate (2003, p. 146)

He goes on to point out the prevalence of women poets among princesses, daughters of ministers, courtesans and wives of enthusiasts. (ii) At a more fundamental level Rajasekhara's conception of the literary in fact is helpful for forging a critique of metaphysical categories of self-sufficient unities, self-generating agencies and subjectivities—whether they are of theological nature or humanist ones.

distinguishes the poet who draws on the available but brings forth the unavailable. This conception of *kavya* radically sets it apart from derivative and imitative works.

There does not exist any specified way of receiving what comes to one or what one is exposed to. The literary lends itself to determination but remains unbound by any; its impulse to drift, lend itself again and again across all unforeseen spatio-temporal and linguistic determinations pulsates restlessly, irresistibly and irreverently. No wonder why Rajasekhara thinks the overused language of the poets remains for ever a virgin for future uses. No wonder the *alamkara* tradition persistently reflects on the poetic only in conjunction with the erotic. For the erotic forever threatens the normative. The poets/Alamkarikas put to work precisely this restive impulse to transgress the normative.

4.6 Literary Affects

Each of the mnemotextual literary inquirers moves across the *vangmaya* immersively and reweaves the elements one gathers for oneself. Practically, it is difficult to come across a single term in these literary inquiries which gained conceptual stability and universality. These inquiries differed, deviated, disfigured, condensed, extended just anything that they put to work; but none accorded any term any normative or universal status. Indeed there is not a single *kavya* that these inquirers from Dandi to Jagannatha and beyond have celebrated as the paradigmatic exemplary work. None discussed any *kavya* in its totality. None approached any *kavya* for its plot—there is nothing like a unity or certainty of a work that arrests their attention. Their "method" of inquiry explored the *vangmaya* non-totalistically. Their literary-linguistic propositions are not discursively demonstrated by relating parts to a whole work. Anandavardhana, for example puts forth his "proposition" that *dhvani* is different from *bhakti* (in the sense of denotation) or *dhvani* is of two kinds. These propositions are not sustained or "proven" by any elaborate discursive demonstration and argumentation. He simply offers a *prayoga*—an instantiation of testimony from other poets' compositions. Some like Bhamaha just offer propositions and eschew any testimonial citations; others like Jagannatha do not cite others at all.

On the contrary for every proposition they (Jagannatha and others) compose their own testimonial citations (which they compose for the purpose—and not derived from their already existing work; some like Aanandavardhana and Rajasekhara occasionally offer citations from their own work.) What is implied in such structure of citation without discursive demonstration is that the cultivated listener is required to see or grasp and take it in the way the figural "proposition" is borne out by the "example". Here it must be pointed out that the "example" in no way exemplifies the (sometimes unidentified) author of the composition. The *prayoga*s cite examples without exemplifications. The cited passage is wrenched out from its location and woven into another reflective context. No further continuities either with the "original" context or with the receiving location are sustained or offered in any narrative order.

While enumerating and proposing *kavya auchitya*s (appropriateness of figural composition) Kshemendra cites two verses—one from Kalidasa and the other from Bhavabhuti. Each of these citations (*shloka*s) is both a part and a whole at the same time (but here no unity of part and whole is worked out in the discussion). Each of these is extracted without any reference to the context from which it is taken. This practice implies two things: (i) that either the context (the work and its author) are too well-known to be commented upon—too demeaning to the listener if an elaborate extra or non-linguistic literary information were provided; or (ii) such contextual, semantic, thematic reference were irrelevant for the point being proposed. Another striking aspect of this "mode of argumentation" is that although Kshemendra cites the passages from two renowned poets, the citations are not put to any comparative scrutiny. Each poet and each citation moves on independent of the other's existence.

More than the context of provenance (understood in terms of contextual determinations) the context of reception appears significant in these situationally invoked and received citations. But even this context of reception does not appear to forebode any essentially unique moment. The proposition in the situation requires testimonial instantiation and the citation accomplishes the task without investing in any organic totality of the work (of provenance or reception) (Kshemendra 1983a, pp. 14–16). Literary inquiries move on with this structure of citation and remain alien to structural unities, narrative closures or comparisons.

The literary inquiries in Sanskrit circulated as non-cohering but converging critical-creative impulses. These inquiries had no normative regulative centre—either in terms of a canon, school or mode. Although customarily later (especially dour postcolonial anthologies and commentators) academics talk about the "schools" of Riti ("mode") Dhvani (resonant suggestion), Vakrokti (deviant utterance), Rasa (flavour), Alamkara ("decorate"), Auchitya (appropriateness), etc., it is difficult to find universal acceptance of any of these modes of reflection across centuries. Each one of these reflective positions was put to thorough contestations. Similarly, these inquirers seemed to have functioned as a non-cohering, diverging community with vigorously contested communications.

The only "thing" that converged their interests and passions, reflections, hostilities and creative force is that figurable, norm-defying radically open-ended multivalent, measureless a-generic, musical metrical composition called *kavya*. Yet, no one agreed on any specific set of figures (of sound and sense) that would forge a *kavya*. From Bharata to Jagannatha the range of figures moved from 4 to 124. Although *rasa* as the poetic rapture or jouissance is advanced as the essence of the poetic, conceptions of *rasa* varied across the inquirers (cf. Sreeramachandrudu 1983, pp. 269–270). Given the fact that *rasa* is not just the rapturous evocation of poetic experience but this itself gets divided into differing *rasa*s complicates the matter further; secondly as *rasa*s (enumerated as nine—*shrungara vira karunadbhuta hasya bhayanakah/bibhatsa raudre cha rasah* [erotic, heroic, compassionate, comic, fearful, devastating, rage are the flavours]) (Seshacharyulu

1989, p. 292)[17] become interchangeable with experiential moods—*bhava*s—rigid categorization of *rasa*s is impossible.

Above all, literary inquirers widely differed with each other in privileging one *rasa* over another. If for Abhinavagupta *shanta* is the fundamental *rasa* and all the others are deformations of *shanta*, for Bhoja (as was for Anandavardhana) *shrungara* (the erotic) is the supreme and most delicate of *rasa*s.[18] If for Bhavabhuti it is *karuna*, for Narayana pandita it is *chamatkara* or *adbhuta*. In short, no one agreed that there are any rigorously determined ways of evoking poetic rapture or whether there is one singular ultimate mood for evocation. After proposing his account of poetic resonance and after enumerating a whole range of different forms (kinds of resonance and the ways in which they are evoked), Aandavardhana has this to advance:

> *Evam dhvaneh prabedah prabhedabhedascha kena shakyante*
> *Samkhyatum dingmatram teshamida muktmasmabhih*

> (Thus are the differences in resonances: how is it possible for anyone to measure these differences? We have merely indicated samples of their immensity. Sound-resonances differ from each other infinitely. [Anandavardhana 1998, p. 932]).

These non-cohering inquirers were haunted by the enigmatic creative force. Each one had a measure of the overpowering *vangmaya*, the figural resources, modes, prevalent *prayoga*s and above all the musical metrical force of *shabda*. In their own modes of recapitulative re-articulation they supplemented the *vangmaya* and forged their creative force. Thus all precedents of the *vangmaya* are recaptured and rearticulated—a re-articulation that opens the chance of superseding the existing, in bringing forth the unprecedented. That is why for this communicating non-community of literary inquirers there is no single *kavya* or *prayoga* that functions as a normative or canonical model; there is no single set of figures, *rasa*s, *riti*s, *bhava*s that can regulate their work as an exemplary set.

The Indic literary inquiries (in Sanskrit) never moved monologically. These inquirers over a millennium (at least) freely composed and drew upon other trans-regional languages such as Prakrit, Apabrhamsha, Paishachi along with Sanskrit. Rajasekhara insists that the poet knew as many languages and poetry in these languages as possible. Kshemendra emphasizes, as pointed out earlier, that the aspiring poet must keenly listen to a whole range of compositions that are available in many languages.

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[17] It can be noticed that the *kosha* (collection) counts only 8 *rasa*s. Commentators include the ninth *rasa* in the conjunction—*cha* -.

[18] For Anandavardhana (1998, pp. 734–735), the real test case for any poet is the treatment of *shrungara*. *Shrungara rasa* is the most delicate of all and can be spoilt by any minor mistake. Such mistakes betray the poet and the latter will suffer humiliation before even his cordial recipients. More importantly, since *shrungara* is within the reach of experience of everyone, it is the most attractive of all *rasa*s. Here it must be pointed out that for over a millennium, the most preferred *prayoga* citations of these inquirers came from the domain of the erotic (often suggesting illicit or transgressive love). The rapture of poetic experience is often compared with erotic love.

Giteshugatha svatha deshabhasha
Kaveyeshu dadyatsaraseshu karnam

(The poet must give his ear to songs, Prakrit *gathas* and vernacular *kavya*s [Kshemendra 1983b, p. 148]).

Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta felicitously invoke (and compose) Prakrit verses in their inquiries. Anandavardhana even alludes to his own Prakrit work (*Vishamabanalila*) in his literary inquiry. But what is striking in all these communications and compositions in transregional languages and literatures is that none of these inquirers takes to translating across the *prayoga*s. We do not come across in these inquiries, as will be shown later, any poet-thinker impelled to translate a passage either into or from Sanskrit. Reflection and imagination, creative force and emergent poetic forms, testimonial citations and situated creations come forth in their own "natal" idioms and the composers do not indulge violating their idiom in translation.

Translation, like criticism, appears to be deeply alien to these literary inquiries. The literary inquiries here do not consolidate a trajectory of criticism as essential to poetic conception. The Sanskrit (literary) language is open to the non-Sanskritic languages persistently without, however, impelled by the need to translate the "foreign" into itself. The reasoning imagination that moves these inquiries comes forth in divergent idioms and they move on incomparably and free from the alienating drive of translation.

4.7 The Literary Worlding

Indian literary inquiries are acutely sensitive to the fact that work of the literary essentially concerns the world; for the moods and affects which it puts to work deeply penetrate and move our modes of being in the world. The work of *rasa* has little effect on those who cultivate indifference towards the vicissitudes of moods and affects, says Abhinavagupta. Those who are immersed in the Vedic and *shastra* learning have such a dried up heart and for them the delectations of *rasa* are impossible to access. Even when they sit in a theatre there is little difference between them and the pillars and walls of the theatre. Desire or urge is a critical factor for experiencing the *rasa*-effect (Sreeramachandrudu 2002, pp. 400–403).[19]

No one can become a poet unless one is a *laukika* ("worldly"), one who knows how to go about in the world. The poet must possess worldly awareness and

[19] Despite the appropriate analogies between *kavya* and the body complex, this critical contrast (between the Vedic scholars and *rasika*s) raises questions about the epistemic status of *kavya* and *kala* in Sanskrit traditions. These traditions as more or less autonomous domains circulate around the Common Era; that is, *kavya* and *kala* as such come into being more than a millennium *after* the spread of the roots of Vedic tradition far and wide. Yet, arguably, these domains take root within the larger Vaidika soil; as a result, they cannot be categorically opposed to the Vedic epistemic imports.

comprehensive knowledge about the world (Sreeramachandrudu 2002, p. 380). Long before the literary inquiries developed their reflections on *kavya*, Bharata clearly spelt out the worldly orientation of dance and drama.

> *Dukhartanam shramartanam, shokartanam tapasvinam*
> *vishrama jananam loke natyame tadbhavishyati.*
>
> (The sorrowful, tired, grief-struck, meditative and the resting people of the world gain succour from dance-drama [Sreeramachandrudu 2002, p. 372]).

Every literary inquirer received Bharata's insights and transformed them in their inquiries into the literary. What is most important for a *kavya* is, contends Bhamaha, defining the worldly orientation; even when it aims at imparting the sense of dharma, *kavya* must render the worldly by nurturing the *rasa*-effect (Bhamaha 1979/2004, p. 19).

But the worldly (*laukika*—pertaining to the world) that these inquirers and their poetic-reflective compositions grapple with is no referential verifiable world of socio-temporal certainties; it is not the historical or biographical referent of the poet's time. This systemic indifference or eschewal of the socio-historical referential world frustrates the literary-critical endeavours of scholars steeped in Abrahamic traditions. For, these traditions are guided by the theologically oriented relation between the text (work, language) and context (world and history); the task of the text is to describe, reckon with, and give an account of the world—which is the creation of the god. All the questions that scholars like Sheldon Pollock project (concerning historicity, reference, agency, the relation between culture and power) are systemically made possible by such an onto-theological orientation. They provide us little more than information about the poet-thinkers. One strand of post-Romantic thought tirelessly differentiated literature from information,[20] whereas the literary inquiries (and reflective inquiries in general) of Sanskrit traditions have practised epistemic indifference towards the empirical-informational world.

Yet, the poet thinkers never denied the world (on the contrary, they were critical of reflective traditions that were indifferent to the effects of the world). They were aware that being in and going about the world—our everyday entanglements and excitements in the world certainly generate a specific set of internally differentiated but self-changing moods or affects. They confronted and embraced these *bhavas* (mood-motifs). Here their difference from the reflective traditions (from which they receive and internalize learning) is radical. If the latter cultivated a certain kind of non-coercive resistance to the worldly effects (*chittavrutti nirodhah* as Patanjali says [n.d., p. 3]), the poet-thinkers exposed themselves to those very effects—but transfigured them in their work as *rasa*-effects. But both these traditions were firm on recognizing the ineluctability of the world. They carved out different paths of going about in the world. No wonder, both insisted on radical

[20] The work of Walter Benjamin comes to mind here (1973/1992, pp. 83–107).

delight (*ananda*) as the singular effect to be cultivated and experienced in being and going about in the world.

It is not by accident that among all the worldly-*rasa*-effects, these inquirers emphasized *shrungara* (which evokes rapture and delight), *karuna* (serene endearment) and *shanta* (calmness, release) as the most cultivable effects. As will be shown later in the discussion on the *Mahabharata*, instead of philological-hermeneutic hair-splitting interpretations, they glossed a work for the flavour of mood that a composition evokes ultimately. In such configuration of the literary, the "first" *kavya*, the *Ramayana*, evokes *karuna* and the first *itihasa*, the *Mahabharata* effects *shanta*. No literary inquirer indulged in "literary critical" decipherment and laborious philological demonstration to prove and establish their insights into the worldly effects.

It is difficult to think of enhancing the set of worldly effects that Bharata has configured; at least it is not easy to dismiss the fundamental insight that the world provokes such effects. Yet these effects are not out there in their referential certainty. What the literary inquiries foreground is the poetic transfiguration of the effects; therefore it is impossible to see an isomorphic relation between the worldly and the poetic effect. The *shrungara* one is familiar with in the world, as Anandavardhana emphasized, is not enough to receive the *rasa*-effect of *shrungara*; simple knowledge of sound and meaning too will not do. One requires to have the cultivated awareness of that which the poetic significance evokes (*kavyarthatattva*)—or *kavyatma* (the *atma* of the poetic composition) (cf. Anandavardhana 1998, pp. 36, 287).

Mnemotextual compositions are assemblages of palimpsests. But these assemblages subtly but significantly respond to what they receive from immemorial and inexhaustible heritages. It is impossible to impose a narrative unity on such palimpsest compositions. In such a mnemocultural heritage literary inquiries weave and disperse creative reflective strands that bring forth genre-defying *kavya*s.

4.8 Configurations of Difference

Against the background of Sanskrit literary inquiries, if we wish to inquire into the status of the literary in European intellectual history, we may ask at the outset (of course within the intellectual context of Europe sketched earlier): Why does Europe need the literary? Why is there such a "raging discord" (as Nietzsche contended) between reason and imagination, truth and art, in European intellectual traditions? Is it the millennial privileging of the referential (relation between the proposition and object, language and the world), Europe's onto-theological orientation that makes it necessary for something that confounds or suspends such a relation or orientation? Or is it an attempt to overturn the millennial subordination of art to philosophy? What is there in the literary that appears to address the "crisis" of thought in European intellectual history?

As is well known, Plato's disparagement of art is based on his divided schema of the intelligible-ideal and sensuous-real—a schema that remains at work even in

Kant's thought (between "theoretical" and "practical" domains). For Plato, art imitates only the illusory and ephemeral sensible phenomena (Plato 1952, Book X, pp. 427–441). One can apprehend the intelligible only by abandoning or transcending the transient world of the sensible. Plato does not see such a promise in art. Whereas Aristotle considers poetry as more proximate to philosophy than it is to history.[21] As can be seen both these conceptions of art or poetry are philosophical determinations of the work of imagination.

There appears to be a palpable continuity between the banishment or a determined containment of art and poetry on the one hand and the overcoming of myth in European intellectual past. The emergence and consolidation of the discourse of truth (philosophy) are seen as proportional to the latter's purging itself of myth. Historically specific discreditation or distantiation of myth can be noticed in European past: in Aristotle's undermining of recourse to myth in philosophical accounts; Christianity's discontinuity with pagan myths of antiquity; Enlightenment's disparagement of myth. Myth would require attention to outside Europe in antiquity and in contemporaneity (other cultures). Hence, the recourse to the literary rather than to the mythical during the "crisis" of European intellectual history at the end of the 18th century. For both the philosophers of antiquity, though with opposing positions, related art/poetry to (the sensible) reality: Plato reduced it to the ephemeral and Aristotle saw its philosophical potential; the literary cannot be determined by or reduced to the referential.

Therefore, the recourse to the literary is another attempt at suspending the referentialist relation to the world. The conception itself is however a child of European intellectual tradition—a reaction formation to its own predominant orientation. For the "literary" puts to work the *imaginative* faculty which brings forth compositions of language (verbal forms) that are not concept-oriented—that are unverifiable and unprovable (which was the case of a certain science and philosophy). German Romanticism emerges at the end of the 18th century to forge the synthesizing medium of *literature*—a medium which brought together the ideal and real, subjective and objective, universal and particular (as Hegel formulated it) (cf. Lacoue-Labarthe 1993b). It is this "modern" reformulation or resolution of the *concept* of the literary that gets institutionalized in the university. But this is quintessentially a philosophical determination of the literary (which began with Aristotle): "Philosophy then controls romanticism" (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988, p. 29).

The agonism or antagonism between the literary (poetry) and the philosophical precedes Plato (as Plato himself states in the *Republic*). What is to be noted here, however, is that the conception of literature is arrived at only in view and on the basis of the philosophical—the discourse of truth. The lesson and experience of the

[21] For Aristotle, if the poet has imaginative relation to an event or action, the historian has factual relation: "the one [historian] relates what has been, the other [poet] what might be. On this account poetry is a more philosophical and a more excellent thing than history; for poetry is chiefly conversant about general truth, history about particular." Poetry has already been conceptualized by the philosopher here (Aristotle 1952, p. 234).

impossibility of uniting the signifier and the intent/desire (that is, "subjectivity" with objective form: a lesson or experience that Paul de Man's work exemplifies [De Man 1971/1983, pp. 142–165, 1986, pp. 21–26, 54–72]) is very much an offspring of the tradition that privileged the concept (of truth). The "crisis" referred to earlier concerns precisely about how to represent the subject with the epistemologically uncertain (uncertain because of their changing nature) means of the phenomenal world (of which language is a part). From Aristotle to Heidegger (even to Derrida) the displacement of myth and resource to the literary has been a systemic effect of European tradition of thought—an effect of the philosophical manouevring of the poetic.

The agonism or hierarchy between literature and philosophy (of art and truth), which structured European reflective traditions from antiquity, is absent in Indic reflective traditions. For, one does not find any discourse of truth which exclusively emerged and displaced or discarded the mnemocultural compositions that pervade Sanskrit *vangmaya*. Although *kavya* as a distinct genre and praxial inquiries into the nature of *kavya* are temporal events—in the sense that their appearance in the proliferation of genres can be specified—the term (*kavya*—saying, utterance) is deeply shaped by the Vedic sonic-melodic utterances. *Kavi* is the speaking reciting seer of the Vedas.

As pointed out earlier, all the inquiries into the literary consequently are deeply marked by the other forms of inquiry (the *anga*s—*shiksha, vyakarana, jyotisha*, etc.—and the *darshana*s) that emerged in the course of intense engagement with the Vedic utterance. (It must be noted in passing that all these forms of inquiry, including mathematical inquiries, were composed in metric-melodic verse genres for millennia.) Two specific points need to be noted here: (i) all these inquiries emerge as different *forms* of *response* to what is *received* in a tradition of proliferating responses and genres; (ii) consequently—none of the responses or genres gains any epistemically privileged position—a position which normatively regulates/manages all that entails as such or the inquiry in general (although each one of these may be given primal space in different reflective-performative context).

Although each of the forms or responses is significant in its own way and each one has a relative privilege and singularly significant, none of them is endowed with eternal and normative significance. No wonder, nowhere does one get any Lakshanika or "literary" "reading" of either the Vedas or the *shastra*s in the last three millennia (though they were acutely aware that the Vedas were replete with figural language).[22] None can be accorded such a prerogative—not even the Vedic utterance and the rituals that accompany it. For the radical impulse of the Sanskrit tradition is to reduce or bracket all systems, all utterances, all acts as formations of *apara* (the non-other)—to be suspended in living and putting to work the enigma of the body complex (we shall return to this thematic of radical suspension later). Therefore all *mata*s [in the sense of praxial reflective formations or "positions"

[22] As pointed out earlier Rajasekhara contends that one cannot know the significance of the Vedic imports unless one is aware of its figural language (2003, p. 6).

(*ekatvinam dvaitinamcha pravada bahuda mata*)][23] are heterogeneous ways of living on which receive and depart from the available that cannot be determined.[24] Therefore the literary is a significant variant and not a crisis solving pathway—for the "crisis" of representation is not a part of mnemocultures that risk the radical suspension of all modes of symbolization in general in going about the world.

Thus the movement of the *mata*s—differential reflective departures –is not a peculiarity of any particular domain—*anga*. Each domain—whether *vyakarana*, *kalpa* (rituals), *jyotisha* (astronomy/astrology) and the *darshana*s (including Bauddha) all are constitutive responses of the differential impulse. *Kavya* and Almkarashastra—genres that emerge temporally are very much a part of these internally differentiating praxial reflective traditions. Literary inquiries in the Sanskrit tradition from Bhamaha to Viswanatha Satyanarayana, were explored and composed by creative minds who were simultaneously capable of forging poetic and reflective utterances. In this context of literary inquiries the division between poetic and discursive (or reflective) uses of language never manifests as a categorical binary; there is no "raging discord" between the intelligible and sensuous worlds here.

The poetic force of all the inquirers into the literary was cultivated through an immersed *adhyayana* of *vangmaya* (which combines both *kavya* and *shastra* compositions). Certain inquirers into the literary, however, vehemently undermine the uses of *shastra*s (logic, *mimansa*, *vyakarana*) for experiencing the essence of the literary. Kshemendra denounces *vayyakarani* and *tarkika* (logician) as detrimental to realizing poetic effulgence. The delighting fragrance of poetic compositions will be repressed and overpowered by the foul smell of *tarkika* treatises, argues Kshemendra (1983b, pp. 150–152). Yet, in the fifth section of his *Kavikanthabharanam* (the Jewel of the Poet's Throat), Kshemendra unequivocally emphasizes the need for cultivated learning of diverse *shastra*s, including *tarka, vyakarana*, Bharata, Chanakya, Vatsayana, all the Vedas and a whole lot of other "sciences" of learning.[25] As pointed out earlier, Rajasekhara who named his

[23] Bhartruhari suggests that the Vedic *vangmaya* has generated from its Vedic source one, two and multiple reflective positions and *traditions* of thought. (the quotation can literally be rendered as: monistic, dualistic, argumentative positions can be multiple) (Bhartruhari 2006, p. I.8, 6).

[24] Rajasekhara gives a measure of the magnitude of the "available" *Vangmaya* when he observes:

Vidyasthananam gantumantam na Shakto/jivédvarshanam yopi sagram sahasram.

(The fourteen forms of learning are spread across the three worlds. Hence, it is said: "even the one who can live for a thousand divine years cannot see the entirety of the forms of learning. One cannot know their totality.") (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 9)

[25] In order to compose *kavya*s the poet should not only listen forever delectable, elegant and heartening compositions with delighting sense but also gain competence in the discourses of sound, naming, etymological works, and metrics. In addition to these learned traditions, the poet-thinker's recommendations are far ranging: The aspiring poet must listen by dedicating his ears to songs and sagas in Prakrit language, *kavya*s in vernacular traditions; he should also take part in debates about new and witty uses of words and language (Kshemendra 1983b, pp. 147–148, 159–161, 183).

composition a *mimamsa* (inquiry) (*Kavyamimamsa*) declares that the sources of *kavya* reside in sixteen *yoni*s (*shodashayoni*). These sixteen are none other than the entire Vedic *vangmaya* (Rajashekhara 2003, pp. 95–96). Notwithstanding the occasional polemical formulations about the *shastra*s, literary inquiries were steeped in the traditions of *vangmaya* in their praxial formulations; yet, in their *prayoga*s they persistently articulated the differential impulse—and distanced themselves and their work from the other received formulations of language.

Therefore, the tension between a *vayyakarani* and a poet cannot be equated with the Platonic schema. *Vayyakarani* is the first among all the learned, says Anandavardhana; *vyakarana* is the source of all forms of learning, he adds.[26] There was no Aristotle (the philosopher proper) between the Upanishads and the Alamkarikas. If the *anga*s and *darshana*s received and responded in differing ways to the Vedic compositions, the *kavya* and *alamkara* domains too partake of this tradition of response and bring forth insistently the singularity of their response.

What we grasp here in the context of the literary and the inquiries into the literary can also be noticed in the case of the Vedic utterance. Contrary to the impression of being the originary activity that the Vedic utterance is seen to be—when one pays attention to the heterogeneous reception of this utterance one notices the radical differential impulse to drift that we find in the literary at work here as well.

The fact that there is no putative unitary mode of receiving the Veda is eloquently audible when one notices the multiple *shakha*s (branches) and *pratishakhya*s, *gotra*-based renderings and other diverse forms of utterance to which the Vedic composition lends itself. In fact one can argue that the radical differential impulse can be tracked most decisively primarily in the proliferation and drifts of the Vedic utterance itself. The Veda, like all the other genres/genos it generates, affirms repeatedly varied iterations of it. It is not fortuitous that the utterance in the Veda is a drifting female (*vak*—from which emerges *vangmaya*)—the female who moves from one to the other (from Asuras to Suras). The utterance cannot be bound to unitary determinations—its dis-figurational drift in fact generates the figural for naming in general: *vacharambhanam vikaro namadheyam* (Veereswarasarma 2002, 6.1.4, p. 28).

In responding to the received the relation between the sign forces (song and gesture), sense relays (affect) and what is beyond or before them, the mnemotexts embody thematically and performatively their alithic, mnemocultural emphasis. The *Chitrasutra* in fact refers to drawing or painting as *chitralekha* (picture drawing) but nowhere to identify or cite a written text. All citations and allusions are to *utterances* of predecessors or other *shastra*s. Similarly the *Kavyamimamsa* distinctly identifies the lithic paraphernalia of writing. But Rajasekhara lists the lithic items as his predecessors prescribe them. Although he refers to what others say here, in his own account the poet is the one who does not himself write. The poet must have a companion who is a polyglot, who can communicate readily,

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[26] *Pradhamehi vidvanso vayyakaranah.*
Vyakaranam mulatvat sarva vidyanam.
It must, however be noted here that Anandavardhana differentiates his conception of *dhvani* (sonic connotation) from that of the *Vayyakarani* (Anandavardhana 1998, pp. 208–209).

who has a beautiful hand, learned in many scripts, himself capable of poetic composition, and a rhetorician; such a companion must be the poet's scribe, says Rajasekhara. When such a companion is not available in the middle of night, any of the palace attendants and friends must serve as his companion. The poet is he who does not write; he is the one who essentially recites—he has a command over the differential system of sound and *patha soundarya* (recitational elegance or beauty) (Veereswarasarma 2002, pp. 138–139, Chap. 7).

The lithic mnemotechnology of writing has a place in the Sanskrit textual heritage, but it is the mnemocultures of recitational performance that form and disseminate the cultural inheritances in the literary labyrinths. The alphabetic writing does not regulate cultural memory here. In embodying the enumerative principle in the mnemotextuality of these works, both the lithic technology and the alithic forms are undoubtedly deployed and recognized—but they neither emphasize nor privilege the lithic or alphabetic form of writing.

Sanskrit mnemocultures accent memories; they shape them melopoeiacally and render them performatively. The listener or receiver too must have the competence to recite the *kavya* the way the poet has composed it, argues Rajasekhara. Every house may have *grantha*s of poems but what is the use, he asks; emphasizing the alithic mode of remembering, Rajasekhara points out that only those that remain inscribed in the cordial-memory can live on. But melodic rendering of *kavya* is not easy to come by; the way generally the poets with refined discernment compose the *kavya* can be appropriately recited by only those who have a cultivated learning (or, to put it more literally—blessed and favoured by the goddess Sarasvati: *yasya siddha sarasvati*). What is more important is the gift of the throat and this cannot come in an instant of existence:

> *Yatha janmantarabhyasatkanthe kasyapi raktata*
> *Tathaiva pathasaundaryam naikajanma vinirmitam*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 39–40, 90)

> (Only through concerted practice in several lives does one rare person acquire tonal sweetness. Similarly, the beauty of recitation can also come only through transgenerational practice.)

For Rajasekhara endowed and cultivated recitation of *kavya* is as important as the unparalleled composition of *kavya*. If he sought a place for literary inquiry among the celebrated *Vedanga*s, he affirmed song (*geya* Veda) the elevated place among the Vedas; he called *geya* Veda the *panchama*, the fifth ("*panchamo geya Vedah*") Veda. Unlike the Vedas, which are open to only the determined addressees, this *panchama* Veda is open to all the *varna*s (biocultural formations):

> *"Vedopavedatma sarvavarnikah panchamo geya Vedah", iti Drauhinih.*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 5)[27]

> (The upa-Veda [offshoot of the Veda], which is open to all the *varna*s, is the *geya* Veda, says Drauhini.)

[27] This *géya* Veda emerges from the Sama Veda.

The mnemotexts discussed here demonstrate that there is no limit to the rearticulaton of the sign forms (verbal or visual) and the desiring bodies. But the relays of sign forms and sense nets terminate before the invisible, the unknown. There can be no continuity between the invisible and the sensible (in all senses of the term); no narrative can run a continuous thread through them. It is precisely this invisible beyond that haunts the sensible in its formulations. Hence, the feverish and interminable weavings of the sign forms and sense nets. Hence, the archival anxieties—anxieties to fix origins and enhance properties in external retentional systems.

The sign forms and sense nets are the only securities that the human possesses—against the tempting abyss of the invisible and unknown. Memory, the invisible and intangible, is a lure to the forms of exogeneity—the drive for objectification and archival possessions. But memories could also resist archivation—they can also pulse with an-archival force. The alithic heritages of speech and gesture live on immemorially, ceaselessly animated by death and urged by the unavailable.

4.9 The Lithic Ethic

If the literary in the Sanskrit traditions does not emerge from the Platonic binary schema of art and philosophy or transcendental (intelligible) and empirical (sensible) world, *kavya* is also not discussed as an ethical resource here; the extensive discussions on the figuration of *kavya* over a period of a millennium, in consonance with other *anga*s of the Veda, never bring in the ethical into their purview. *Kavya* is not the domain one turns to configure an ethical position. The bulk of *alamkarashastra* focuses on the intricacies of figural language in achieving poetic effect—such as *rasa, ananda,* or *dhvani*. It offers no account of any paradigm derived from the domain of *kavya* to address the question of how one should live. *Kavya* is not aimed at offering any moral knowledge or any ethical effect.

Similarly in the extensive work of the Vedangas (*vyakarana, chhandah* [metrics]*, nirukta* [roots]*, jyotisha*, etc.) and the *darshana*s one finds no significant space for *kavya*s as ethical sources. Patanjali's aphoristic formulation about the end of *Vyakarana*—*rakshohagamalaghvasandeha*[28]—has no reference either to the ethical or the poetic. Yet, the *kavya* domain (including *alamkarashastra*) is very much a part of the differential reflective compositional complex of the Sanskrit traditions. For none of these traditions sets down discursive accounts of

[28] The ends of *Vyakarana* are specified at the very beginning of Patanjali's *Mahabhashya*. He identifies the five ends: to protect and sustain the Veda (*raksha*), to impart contextually-sensitive practice of Vedic compositions, (*uha*), to learn the allied disciplines of the Veda (*agama*), to gain competence in economizing strategies (*laghva*) and to gain unequivocal learning (*asamdeha*) (cf. Patanjali 1983, pp. 3–5).

ethical paradigms—as the Socratic question (how should one live?) has resulted in the Western episteme.

The ethical like the poetic seems to be a cardinal offshoot of the philosophical or religious discourse. Perhaps the search for the ethical in the literary has much to do with Christian than with the Pagan world. Plato's ambivalence and Aristotle's aversion (towards the poetic/mythical/imaginative[29]) has contributed to the reduction of the poetic in considering the ethical. The poets, for Plato, unlike other "useful" men such as carpenters and statesmen, lack any object of their own. They imitate the objects (natural or artificial) that are already there. Therefore they can neither provide any virtues, order a state or individual life as teachers; they are far removed from truth which only thinking as dialectics or philosophy can accomplish (Plato 1952, X, pp. 427–428).

The ethical was nurtured in the granary of the philosophical. In fact the fundamental agonism between the poetic and the philosophical was said to be inaugurated by this reduction of the literary by the new genre of thought called philosophy. Nietzsche sees a decisive break between Heraclitus and Socrates/Plato-Aristotle (the latter being the paradigmatic philosopher) (Kofman 1998, pp. 19–20). Nietzsche's own anti-Socratic crusade is devoted to redressing the life denying de-metaphorizing tradition of the West. In an anti-Platonic stride Nietzsche reiterates art as a life affirming force: "We have *art* so that we *do not perish from the truth"*…It is "*not possible … to live with the truth* … the 'will to truth,' i.e., to fixed apparition, is 'already a symptom of degeneration.'… *Art, as transfiguration, is more enhancing to life than truth, as fixation of an apparition*" (1979, pp. 216–217, emphasis in original). Despite Nietzsche's vehemence against Christian morality, his defense of art (against philosophy) is conceived as an ethical assertion (for Nietzsche, Christianity was little more than "Platonism for the people"—in the sense that both were life denying in their investment in the supersensuous ideal) (Heidegger 1979, p. 159). As art affirms life, it remains an ethical force against the nihilistic vocations of philosophy, history and religion (1979, pp. 160–161; Nietzsche 2003).

Although the instructional function of art (apart from its delighting role) has historical antecedents, the ethical turn to art appears to have gained strength after the 18th century. This is probably a religious legacy of Christianity. That is, traditionally religion was believed to have imparted morality in Christian culture. If philosophy (which is a kind of atheism—something that can emerge only in theological cultures) from antiquity offered the grounds of the ethical, modernity in its claims to displace religion, sought to pursue the ethical in the literary. Drawing on the German Romantic conception of the literary as a synthesizing figure or medium, Coleridge, Arnold, Eliot, Leavis underwrite this requisite of the literary.

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[29] For Aristotle the difference between him and the authors of tales of gods and myths is not temporal but intellectual: It is "not worthwhile to consider seriously the subtleties of mythologists. Let us turn rather to those who reason by means of demonstration" (Aristotle quoted in Vernant 1990, pp. 210–211).

No wonder why in the British context between the wars, instead of philosophy it was literary criticism that was said to have provided the ethical space.[30]

Art or literature as the source of the ethical is alien to Sanskrit reflective traditions; their categorical conceptual status too cannot be affirmed with certainty. For these traditions do not move on the categories of thought such as philosophy, literature, art or religion—categories that are decisive parts of a conceptually oriented culture. In contrast to such discursively sustained categories, Sanskrit reflective traditions require praxial (*prayoga*) orientation—putting to work the symbolic (forms of exteriorization) in modes of living. Thus, art is neither a source nor a terrain of/for the ethical.

Actually all the domains of "art"—*kavya* and *kala* (plastic and visual)—have emerged as generic effects nearly two millennia after the formation of other mnemocultural Sanskrit formations (*shruti, smruti* and *sutra*). Neither *kavya* nor *kala* was forged as the force of the unconscious to counter some discourse of the conscious. There is no discourse in the Sanskrit tradition that seeks recourse to such a division. *Shruti* compositions circulate in the tradition as sighs of *para* in the body—exhalations of a mode of being. *Smruti* forms are received as the imaginative composition of the learned on the *shruti*s (*vedavidbhih prakalpitah*—as Bhartruhari says [2006, p. 1.7, 6.]). Therefore, despite extensive hair-splitting accounts about figures of speech over centuries, no theory of metaphor is offered that is set out to redress the demarcation of some literature/philosophical antagonism.

The most immemorial modes of symbolization of speech and gesture are idiomatically filiated to the bodies that bring them forth in Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions. As the bodies come forth in radical singularities, so do these mnemocultural symbolizations. Therefore, as bodies are un-translatable (nobody can function as a substitute for another—none can take the experience of life or death of the other), so are the modes of symbolization that are distinctive of individuated mnemocultures. Cultural translations of these modes, as will be shown later, are extremely rare. Archive and translation are co-constitutive activities. That which can be archived, which can be objectified for appropriation and preservation externally enters the circuits of translational exchange.

Unarchival mnemocultures—cultures that do not measure their modes of being on the basis of their archival potential or accumulation—have no use for translation. These cultural singularities are sustained through the distinctive—incomparable—practices of these communities. Since mnemocultures are praxially oriented, they remain relatively indifferent to the performative cultures of memory of other communities. No wonder *jati*s (and tribes) do not provide accounts of cultural practices of each other. Similarly, in post-Socratic period, Greek philosophy travels and gets translated but it gets abstracted from Greek mnemocultures: "between the greatest man of the concept, Aristotle, and the customs and art of the Hellenes the greatest abyss still yawns" (Nietzsche quoted in Kofman 1998, p. 20).

[30] For a critique of Anderson, cf. Bernard Sharratt (1982, pp. 141–168).

Whereas, as shown earlier, even until Socrates and even in Plato one can see the distinct mnemocultural signs of Greek formations. Nietzsche's cry for Dionysius is a testimony to and critique of the abstraction (which he denounces as "esthetic Socratism") (Nietzsche 2003, p. 87). Early Christianity considered even philosophy as an alien, stubbornly Pagan cultural product (Ree 1987, pp. 34–36; Grafton 2001, pp. 54–58). Arabic thought in medieval times further abstracted Greece in its selective reception. Mnemocultural singularities resist certain traversals.

In other words, we contend, there is a significant divergence between mnemocultural technics of symbolization and lithic modes of representation. The former perform or live the symbolization whereas the latter increasingly and exclusively attend to the technics and effects of representation; that is, the latter move away more and more from the performative imperative and embodied rendering of/as symbolization. Consequently this develops technics of interpretation, authentication and understanding as the only viable and covetable modes of attending to the symbolization or exteriorization.[31] Knowledge production and scholarship begin to gain prominence as the modes and material forms of representing, exploring or validating the cryptic code of the god. In this exclusive cathexis of "interpretation of interpretation" of written texts—the question of living, performative tending of the body receives diminishing attention.

In Christianity with its own investment in the valorization of origin and authenticity, veracity and demonstrability (document, archive, decipherment, etc.,) the entire attention gets devoted to dealing with the exteriorized symbol-object—essentially written documents. Truth-seeking and knowledge production become the cherished or regulating values of inquiry. Mnemotechnics—especially in its lithic or scribal form—mainly marked by monotheistic cultural formations becomes the paradigm for thinking. The value of thought is measured by its duration in objectually—that is, non-performatively—preserved technics (what Derrida calls in a related context "objective memory"—"the project of archivization" [2007, p. 99]).[32] All debates about the "progress" of thought share the assumption that scribal mnemotechnics have inaugurated a very novel paradigm

[31] Heidegger (Heidegger 1982, pp. 10–11, 29) quotes Schleiermacher on the concepts of hermeneutics and criticism: "Hermeneutics and criticism, both philological disciplines, both methodologies, belong together, because the practice of each presupposes the other. The first is in general the art of understanding rightly another man's language, particularly his written language; the second, the art of judging rightly the genuineness of written works and passages, and to establish it on the strength of adequate evidence and data." Although Heidegger later offers an etymological account tracing it to the Greek god Hermes, as connoting "interpretation of gods" by the poets, his account is not completely free from the German Romantic legacy evident in the quotation from Schleiermacher.

[32] In a related context, Popper says: "For me knowledge consists essentially *exosomatic* artefacts, or products, or institutions. It is their *exosomatic* character that makes them rationally criticizable. There is knowledge …which is stored in our libraries" (quoted in Houben and Rath 2012, p. 39, footnote 64).

for thinking ("literacy thesis"). This is not just a historical reckoning but is deemed as the normative and regulative model for human kind.

In order to continue the epistemic comparative strain of this work, two substantial accounts of the undermining of mnemocultural traditions, which have a bearing on the discussion of art/truth dichotomy we have discussed so far, can be sketched here. In his entire work on the relation between *muthos* and logos in archaic Greece, Vernant recounts this as a decisive break between them on the one hand and a progressive development of the logos on the other. His account hardly discusses in any significant way the performative aspect of the pre-Socratic thought.[33] On the contrary, he sees Eleatic performative traditions and Orphic rites as practices from which "philosophy" progressively emancipated itself. He sees the performative practices as part of secretive, religious, group-oriented and indeed closed activities. Whereas, for Vernant, philosophy was a secular, democratic and "open" systematization of thought. Vernant's schema—*muthos* to logos, (magic and) religion to philosophy—is too progressivist to engage with performativity in any other way.[34]

In a more programmatic way to stage "secrecy" as constitutive of literature, Derrida tracks the double movement of what could be called the performative in European culture. What is here called performative appears in Derrida's discussion of the orgiastic. As examined in an earlier chapter, in his discussion of Jan Patocka's work, Derrida recounts the double move of sublation and repression of the orgiastic (the daemonic) that happens with Plato and Christianity respectively in European heritage. This incorporated and repressed orgiastic, Derrida argues, forms the substance of secrecy in configuring European responsibility. Derrida in his own (psychoanalytic) way sees the peculiar logic of secrecy as something that no repression can eliminate or erase. Repression results in displaced return of the repressed. This return of the repressed, according to Derrida, is seen by Patocka as

[33] Tracking the roots of contemporary forms of criticism in ancient Greece, Andrew Ford argues that in archaic Greece song was inextricable from its performative context and they were assessed on the basis of their contextual efficacy. The scribal literacy forged "the tools of criticism" (poetics as a topic for students of philosophy), judging and measuring speech, demarcated genres while suppressing the performative contexts of song cultures (2002, Chap. 1, pp. 280–281).

[34] Although Vernant is critical of such progressivism, his work does not completely extricate itself from such a schema in its historicist differentiation of mythic thought from rational or philosophical thought on the one hand and Europe from Asia on the other. The language of break, discontinuity, division and rupture is quite prominent in Vernant's work (Vernant 2006, pp. 371–408). To be sure, Vernant finds "another kind of logic" than a binary one in the world of *muthos* (mnemocultures), his work largely tracks the latter as a receding world of orality. This other kind of logic is that of metaphor, allegory and symbolic form and it differs from the language of logos which expresses truth directly. It is difficult to free Vernant's work from this binarism of metaphor versus reason—which is in fact yet another avatar of art/poetry versus philosophy or imagination versus reason. The "reasoning" of myth (or mnemocultures) must always be unveiled by the language of logos; logos gives meaning to the "rapturous" experience of the "art", Nietzsche announced. Cf. Heidegger (1979, pp. 77–87). Also cf. Vernant (1990, p. 260).

(a Christian) European failure to free itself from the orgiastic or daemonic Plato. Patocka, Derrida goes on, tracks the return of the orgiastic in the triumphal celebrations in historic moments such as the French Revolution. In a word, Plato's apprehensions about theatrocracy continue to haunt contemporary accounts of ethical responsibility.

Although the psychoanalytic reckoning of repression continues in Derrida's account, his story of secrecy in Judaism is markedly different from his (Patocka's) account of the orgiastic (in the Pagan Greek world). He sees Abraham's secrecy—what the God told him—that which he will not reveal is recounted as *the* condition of literature. Derrida sees a covenant between literature and secrecy. This covenant itself, he affirms, is a part of Abrahamic heritage: "Although the essence of literature, in its strict sense, in the sense that this Western word retains in the West, were essentially descended from Abrahamic rather than Greek culture" (Derrida 1995/2008, p. 132).

4.10 The Literary Absolutism

The emergence of literature is seen here as the paradoxical effect of secrecy. What is held back, repressed, betrays the effort in generating irrepressible accounts of the imagination. The most crucial element of these accounts is that it can never be equated with or reduced to any determined referent. It escapes all determinations. One will never know why Abraham kept the secret—even as accounts of it multiply. Such is the element of literature: through a perennial deviation or drift from the referent, the (literary) secret provokes interminable readings. The essence of literature here appears to be a Judaeo-Christian communication, responding to a call "between the absolute Father and Son" (Derrida 1995/1998, p. 134), which seems to take place "in an original history of the 'acts' of *inscription and reading*" (Attridge 1992, p. 45, emphasis added). It is curious that Derrida should maintain this asymmetry in his analysis of secrecy (or the performative) in Greek and Judaic traditions. He even goes on to claim that the foundations of literature cannot be located in Greece. Further, unlike the Abrahamic secrecy, the repressed orgiastic does not have a chance of any kind of affirmative return. In the totalizing figure of the orgiastic (which bundles together seamlessly as it were the libidinal, irrational, the unconscious, the corporeal, and above all the Pagan), the affirmative potential of the performative or ritual receives no chance of reconfiguring. This is rather odd in a philosopher who affirms the performative endlessly. It may be argued that after all, in consonance with his account of the return of the repressed, Derrida's persistent emphasizing of the performative is an affirmation of what has been systematically repressed. Yet, this reckoning through detour, however, does not receive the substantive attention that Derrida gives to the "objective memory" with which he designates literature. For Derrida the "institution" of literature and its licence or prerogative to say everything and anything are peculiarly the achievements of the Western culture.

> Greek or Latin poetry, non-European discursive works, do not, it seems to me, strictly speaking belong to literature….The name 'literature' is a very recent invention….The set of laws or conventions which fixed what we call literature in modernity was not indispensible for poetic works to circulate. The *principle* (I stress that it's a principle [J.D.]) of 'being able to say everything,' the socio-juridico-politico guarantee granted 'in principle' to literature, is something which did not mean much, or not that, in Graeco-Latin culture and *a fortiori* in a non-Western culture (Attridge 1992, p. 40).

The modern conception of literature that Derrida is referring to here emerges squarely from German Romantic thought. It is a seminal part of a philosophical inquiry and is "is thoroughly determined as a response to a certain philosophical 'crisis'" or a general crisis concerning moral, social, political and religious inheritances. The contrapuntal pulls of the Romantic project were formed by the concern for the "transmitted heritage" on the one hand and a claim for an "absolutely original innovation" (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988, pp. 3–5), on the other.

The privileged locus of expression of this general crisis is conceptualized as "literature": the genre of literature sublates the ancient (heritage) into the modern and can contain just everything (one remembers Coleridge: imagination "balances and reconciles the opposite or discordant elements").[35] The entire programme of German Romanticism aimed at unifying "poetry and philosophy" and yearned for turning science into art and art into science (F. Schlegel quoted in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy1988, p. 13).[36] Nietzsche, "prolonging" Romantic legacy, only slightly modified the task: "*to see science under the optics of the artist, but art under the optics of life*" (quoted in Heidegger 1979, p. 18, emphasis in the original). German Romanticism *rearticulates* the very ancient agonism between poetry and philosophy that existed since Plato and Aristotle (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1988, pp. 5–13). The institution of literature that Derrida discussed is the "literary absolute"—that which can say *everything* is a modern Judaeo-Christian rendering of a philosophical account.

"Literature" as "reading" the "'acts' of inscription" can be seen as a generalization of a culturally singular experience or even secularization of a theological idea. In such extension, Derrida points to the possibility of anything becoming literary. More specifically:

> Every text that is consigned to public space, that is relatively legible or intelligible, but whose content, sense, referent, signatory, and addressee are not fully determinable realities—realities that are at the same time *non-fictive* or *immune from all fiction*, realities that are delivered as such, by some intuition, to a determinate judgment—can become a *literary* object (Derrida 1995/2008, p. 131, emphasis in the original).

That is, every event or signature which is repeatable and which remains in spite of its alleged contexts and survives the determinations of these contexts can

[35] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, accessed via http://www.pdfbooks.co.za/library/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge-Biographia_Literaria.pdf (accessed on 15 November 2011), p. 101.

[36] F. Schlegel quoted in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988, p. 13).

circulate as a literary entity. Literature is an entity without essence or substance of its own (i.e., "self-identity of the literary thing" (Derrida 1992, p. 47)—which was the quest of the Romantics). But "readings" of this literary inscription (that which is sans essence but which can say anything), Derrida argues, have been dominated by metaphysical assumptions concerning referential certainties. That is, readings of literature—or literary criticism—are often governed by "naïve referentiality" where a text is seen to be in a derivative relation to a presupposed referential reality be it sociological, psychological, biographical, historical ("thematism, sociologism, historicism, psychologism") (Derrida 1992, p. 49). In seeking a transparent continuity between text and context, contends Derrida, literary criticism "is perhaps structurally philosophical"—for philosophy conventionally sought to demonstrate such thetic (thesis-oriented reckoning) positions between the work and the world. Therefore, goes on Derrida, "What I am saying here" about philosophy "is not necessarily a compliment" (Derrida 1992, p. 53). Decades of Derrida's work unraveled the "philosophical" assumptions that govern our readings of the relation between the text and the world. In contrast, literary texts play with (that is, draw on, lend themselves to and suspend) reference and meaning, enable but escape any thetic relationship with the context or reality (Derrida 1992, pp. 46–47).[37] Such conceptualization of literature—as an approximation of or unveiling of the referent—is made possible only in an onto-theological culture that presupposes the priority of the referent—whether that of the world (the work of the god) or of the agent (the god/man of the hu*man*ities). Literature in this regard can be seen as an atheistic gesture; literature is a Babelian response to the commands of the god (we shall return to this theme later).

4.11 Literary Praxis

The literary inquiries that spread across over a millennium all over the subcontinent and beyond cannot be fitted into what has been institutionalized in colonial modernity as (literary) criticism. As we argued earlier, in the Sanskrit traditions there is no Romantic investment in the critical as the essence of the poetic.[38] If the task of the critic is to elucidate or explicate the work, and relate it to the world, with the tools of comparison and analysis, capture the essence of the work and demonstrate through verbal commentary how all the parts cohere to form an aesthetic symmetry (a "well wrought urn")—literary inquiries in Sanskrit have no place for such philological theo-hermeneutical protocols and aims. If the task of

[37] Such a model of interpretation governs Sheldon Pollock's entire project of "Sanskrit Knowledge Systems" in general and his account of "literary cultures in history" in particular.

[38] The 19th century German Romantic movement privileges the critical in the poetic—and accords criticism the prerogative to elicit and thus makes the poetic work dependent on the critical. Cf. Paul de Man (1986, pp. 82–84); Weber (2008, pp. 62–66).

the critic is to rightfully restitute the work to its alleged provenance—authorial, social, economic, political, historical grounds—Sanskrit reflective traditions embody a cultivated disregard for such indulgences.

As both Bharata and Bhamaha affirm, there is no domain of learning in the world that can escape the reach of *natya* or *kavya*. But the latter receives and responds to these domains in bringing forth unprecedented forms and compositions. This mode of responsive reception makes "criticism" superfluous in these traditions of composition and reflection (there is indeed no word in Indian languages which comes close to this term; the term *vimarsa* which is used to refer to literary-critical work has origins of this use in colonial modernity).

The variedly spread literary inquiries insist that the worldly-*rasa*-effects of *kavya*s are essentially experience oriented. As the poet composes transfigured effects and evokes them in the listener—the latter has the possibility of access to the experience evoked. The poet and the listener must meet in the world but beyond it (while being in it) to experience the rapture evoked by the rendering of the *kavya*. Communication of *rasa*-effect can only be possible experientially, these inquiries insist. The question of verbally verifying experiences, building approximating systematic explanations of *rasa*-experience does not arise in these inquiries. Cultures that seek verbal explanations analyse and elaborate—in a word, verbally objectify experiences to prove their validity, project such questions.

German Romanticism, drawing on a deeper Abrahamic (or Judeo-Christian) heritage valorized "criticism" to enhance the significance of the work of art. In contrast, the literary inquiries that we are exploring show a different experience of the poetic-effect. *Kavya* for these inquirers (who, as said earlier, were all very accomplished poets themselves) is a performative act. The source and the target of the *rasa*-effect is none other than the body itself. *Kavya* comes forth as *a responsive reception* of the available—where the available can never be determined decisively. Response here takes the form of a reflective-creative action—an action which is not a direct verbally formulated answer to what is received; but it is embodied and praxially enacted.

The irreducible locus of literary performative response and experience is the body. The world, in Sanskrit reflective traditions, recursively comes forth and dissolves with and as radically heterogeneous (organic and non-organic) bodies or phenomenal forms. At a fundamental level, being in and going about the world involves dealing with the body that one is endowed with. Therefore Indian reflective-creative traditions foreground the experience-oriented body as the medium and effect of responsive reception to the available. But the embodied experience is not shored up for formulating cultural universals. No surrogate or substitute can receive the communication of experience of/for the body.

No wonder, why the literary inquiries in Sanskrit figured *kavya* (instantiation of a sonic-figural forge) as the body complex. Vamana calls the first section of his composition *shariradhikaranam* (reflective inquiries concerning the poetic body complex). After delineating the components of the *kavya*-body, Vamana specifies the enigmatic, secretive other that inhabits the body which cannot be reduced to the physical components of the body. For Vamana this undeterminable essence of

the *kavya* is *riti—ritiratma kavyasya* (as every body has an *atma*, so does every *kavya* its *riti*; *riti* is the mode or act of being of the *kavya*) (1981/2003, pp. 1:6, 7). The body complex comes forth with the other (*para*) that cannot be measured or conflated—but which is always only reckoned—with the finitudinal instantiation of the body-form. Every literary inquiry over a millennium grappled with this reflective figuration-enunciation of the body-complex. For Anandavardhana, *dhvani* (the sounding-resonance) is that enigmatic alterity of the *kavya*-body.

> *Sharirasyevatma … kavyatmeti vyavasthitam*
>
> (As the body has its *atma*, so does *kavya* its *atma: dhvani*) (Anandavardhana 1998, pp. 56, 62–63, the wording of the quotation slightly rearranged).[39]

Every literary endeavour is a relentless strife to grasp or realize the enigmatic and secretive other that co-emerges with and inhabits the *kavya*-body. Each literary inquiry or exploration itself is a re-articulation of the generative force that results in the emergence of a body. The bringing forth of the unexpected, even unprecedented body-form induces rapture, the delighting jouissance of embodied experience. Almost all inquirers into the literary insist on the erotic effect of the generative force. Their compositions while delineating figural effects invariably offer numerous instantiation from the erotic (especially transgressive/illicit) domain. As pointed out earlier, Mammata's position regarding the literary as that which is created in accord with conventions but does not abide by any norms (*niyatikruta niyama rahitam*) is also equally applicable to the erotic.

The poet-thinkers of Sanskrit tradition were acutely aware of this filiation between the literary and the erotic-generative impulse. Poetic matter is suffused with erotic affect says Vamana (1981/2003, p. 20). What needs emphasis here is the fact that both the reflective traditions (Upanishads, *sutraic* and *darshanic* compositions) as well as literary inquiries insist on the critical space of the body for experiencing the unprecedented. Ultimately it is on the locus of the body—both as the medium and effect of the generative-erotic impulse that the transfiguration of the instantial rhythms must be realized. The realm of freedom is profoundly filiated to such transfiguration of the finitudinal existent. The body as the absolutely irreducible material form—as the bundle of inscrutable traces is always the most enigmatic arena for tranfigurement and resonant intimations. These intimations from immemorial and nonfinite durations are rewoven and rearticulated performatively or mnemopraxially in such cultures.

Literary inquiries amplify such re-articulations most intimately. Such exceptional capability of the poet is called *pratibha*. This unique faculty kindled and nurtured across intractable duration enables the poet to bring forth not only the unprecedented—but touches and awakens submerged and dormant experiences of immemorial pasts (cf. Bhattatauta, discussed in Sreeramachandrudu 2002, p. 375). Every mnemopraxial composition—whether ritual or recitation, performative or

[39] As the body is composed of limbs, so does the *kavya* gain its charm through the composition of its elements. Cf. Anandavardhana (1998, p. 535).

embodied ordeals is premised on the possibility of rearticulating the received, immemorially spread across the fibers of the body.

Mnemopraxial living on implies that every existent, being-form, is at once the field and the force to work the field; it is through the embodied enactment of this double task (of the field and force—*kshetra* and *kshetrajna*) that the transfiguration of the rhythms of destiny of the existent can be experienced. In such mnemopraxial living on, destinies are not substitutable, for each existent is required to put to work its destiny; nor are the destinies comparable—for one's body complex is one's singular endowment/gift/curse and chance. There is no meta-narrative position from where an ideal paradigm for emulation can be offered. As singular and finitudinal entities every body complex is required to put itself to work for its transfiguration. Mnemopraxiality is the interminable call for living on innovatively in unprecedented ways (we shall see the effects of this call in the later chapters as well).

Even as we are caught in the discursive and institutional structures implanted by the epistemic violence of European heritage, we have aimed at configuring cultural difference in the Indian context. For heuristic purposes we have focused on culture specific articulations of memory. Inscribed memories, "objective memory", lithically or prosthetically retained, develop and deploy specific techniques of deciphering memories. In contrast, as we have explored, alithically nourished memories come forth and live on performatively. We have inquired into the consequences of the invasion of a culturally dominant (mnemotechnical) mode of articulating memory on another discredited (mnemocultural) mode. We have examined how the conceptions and protocols of reading privileged in Europe violate performative cultural practices in India. We have contended that the Sanskrit reflective traditions figure the body as the irreducible locus, effect and medium of memory, desire and awareness.

Composition after composition, reflection after reflection, disputation after disputation, genre after genre recursively grapples with the forces of memory and desire, *smruti/jnapaka* and *vasana/trushna* in these traditions. This relentless work of the generative forces, it must be noted has preferred over millennia mnemocultural forms of reflection and recitation. Mnemocultures (of speech and gesture, (non)narrative and performance, visual and verbal modes), as pointed out earlier, put to work the most substantial/essential paradigm of the material—the body—as the effect and medium of the generative forces.

It is this mnemocultural generative impulse that has defied any narrative totalization of creative and reflective compositions in India; for, as will be shown in the following chapters, this impulse is more oriented towards action knowledges or praxial learning rather than consolidating identitarian narrativization of existence. This impulse is radically at work in bringing forth genres and *jati*s and their heterogeneous dispersal. The next chapter will turn to the problematic of narrative imperative as it developed in European intellectual history and its space in reflective creative formations of India. For this purpose the composition of *Panchatantra* will be examined in detail. It will demonstrate how specific compositional modes such as non-narrative and narrative distinguish mnemotexts of Sanskrit traditions.

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Chapter 5
Fables of Identity and Contingencies of Certainty: Disarticulations of the *Panchatantra*

Abstract This chapter inquires into the epistemic space of narrative in Indic mnemocultures. If narrative is seen to filiate identity and ethics in temporal terms in European tradition, Sanskrit mnemocultures suspend any such status to narrative; they do not sublimate memory in narratives of self-hood. They spread across through non-narrative strands and are oriented to imparting action knowledges. This chapter concentrates on the *Panchatantra* to explore the relation between narrative and non-narrative strands and their ethical political implications.

Keywords Narrative imperative · Identity · Ethics · Panchatantra · Fable · Translation

5.1 The Narrative Imperative

When one engages with Sanskrit reflective and creative compositions one is struck by the "belated" or fundamentally staggered emergence of what can be called lithic prosthetic turns in these traditions. These turns can be specified as orthotic turn, iconic and pictorial turn, translational ("critical" and comparative) turn and narrative turn. There is no single work in the Indian context that examines these "turns" in any connected and comprehensive theoretical way. If at all they receive attention, it is largely historical-informational and discrete in nature. Even such accounts are mainly induced by originary, evolutionary and evidential concerns.

Such accounts typically deal with issues such as: emergence or origins of scripts (Houben and Rath 2012; Solomon 1995) the first sculptural evidence, the beginnings of translations, and search for core narratives preoccupied them; and they determined the interpretations of Indian cultural formations. Such an unexamined intellectual consensus regarding Indian traditions is baffling. But someone like Balagangadhara would see nothing baffling about such a consensus. For, he would argue, these accounts are epistemically driven by the experience of their own cultural background, where Europe played *the* culture of reference.

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What is curious in this situation is that no one seems to be struck by the radical absence of lithic prosthetic drive in Sanskrit cultural formations for nearly two millennia. What does such absence or what I call cultivated indifference towards the lithic drives tell us about these mnemocultural formations? How do the staggered turns actually operate in these reflective creative generations? This section addresses the problematic of narrative and paves way for a longer discussion of its implications in the chapter on the *Mahabharata* in the next part.

For nearly two millennia narrative was accorded no privileged space in Sanskrit mnemocultures. Narrative is an account or a recounting of an event or experience or occurrences which affect an individual or people. Narratives are efforts at seeking an order, carrying out a meaning, figuring a coherence or consistency in happenings that otherwise are said to be chaotic. In a word, narratives are regulated by the imperative to seek order out of chaos. Narrative, thus, articulates a desire for control. Where narratives are regulated by such an urge to seek order, they lend themselves to metanarratives. Metanarratives configure at a secondary level, an order from the apparently polyvalent or disparate happenings of a narrative. The world or life is to narrative what narrative is to metanarrative: an urge to configure the order or cosmos out of chaos of living. Aristotle to Paul Ricoeur narrative receives this ordering determination in European intellectual heritage.

For Ricoeur (1999, pp. 8–9), narratives are custodians or curators of memory; preservation of memory is an ethical responsibility for it affirms identity and continuity: "It is precisely through narratives that a certain education of memory has to start". Incidentally, here memory for Ricoeur is entirely objectified collectibles of the past—archived against the threat of destruction and erosion of the traces of the past. Prosthetic or surrogate bodies—as archives and museums—become the guardians of memory here: "all human activity is a kind of countertrend which endeavours to see that growth prevails over destruction, and that traces and archives are preserved and kept alive" (Ricoeur 1999, p. 10).

Plato is said to have burnt his poems and went to join Socrates to learn dialectics. By the time of Plato already poetry and the discourse of reason or truth appear to have become divided categories to choose from; already *muthos* and logos, imagination and reason, art and philosophy appear to be on mutually opposing sides. But the *story* is not so simple. Plato's attempt to repress and erase poetry, even if he did so deliberately, remains a failed one. For Plato's accounts of the dialectic are deeply structured by dialogue, narrative, myth, allegory, ritual and custom.

Despite Plato's parricidal urge, Homer continues to haunt the dialogues of Plato; despite his love of dialectics, Plato ends up writing a *novel*, declares Nietzsche. But Plato's apparently multi-voiced novel in turn ends up generating a fable of narrative in European heritage. This is the narrative of logos' triumph over *muthos*. Nietzsche accuses Socrates of such a *fable* and sets out to redress the inheritance. One can argue that in privileging myth and art in his onslaught on "esthetic Socratism", Nietzsche actually ends up erecting a counter-narrative. Counter-narrative only confirms the validity or legitimacy of narrative.

But Nietzsche's moves may not fit easily into such dualisms.[1] As we saw in Ricoeur, the formidable legacy of the "fable"—that of (objective) memory, narrative and ethics combinative—continues to shape the ipsocratic orientation of European heritage.

Due to multiple proliferations of verbal-melodic compositions, Sanskrit reflective-recitational traditions evince a marked indifference to narrative. Vedic compositions are eminently non-narrative in their movement. No narrative regulates the training of memory in these compositions for at least two millennia. What receives emphasis is the efficacy and contextual appropriateness of the utterance or recitation and not their meaning or connotation. It must, however, be noted that nowhere in these traditions there is an injunction against narrative.

Vedic compositions do contain minimalist narratives or *narratemes*—which remain unelaborated in the context of their appearance; they (may) get elaborated elsewhere. Neither semantic unity nor narrative coherence or totality is essential for these collections of hymns (*samhita*s). Semantic manipulative calculation of significance or value—called *arthavada*—is resolutely undermined in approaching hymns. What is of utmost importance is their embodied performative efficacy. Even this rendering does not abide by the law of unity or totality. Recitations often confine themselves to specifically (for the occasion) chosen fragments or sections (called *panasa*s in Telugu Vedic traditions) of the hymns. In this entire process neither the concept nor the relevance of the fragment receives any elaborate verbal formulation, nor do the recitations receive any verbal justification on the basis of the context. In brief, there is no tradition of offering any explanatorily legitimizing account of what one does.

If narrative is an explanatory account—figural or literal—of context and existence—does such a configuration pronounce the peculiarity of a specific cultural orientation? Can narratives exist beyond or unconnected to explanatory accounts? What is the nature and function of narratives in such a configuration where they have no epistemological status?

Since narratives are not oriented towards explanatory accounts, in certain "configurations of learning", could it be possible that they are not treated as enigmatic, cryptic, enclosed, concealing accounts of truth as such? That is, does this mean that narrative and truth are not filiated here? In such configurations, could it be possible that narratives proliferate without being subjected to demands of disclosure, revelation, unveiling or discovery? Can one assume that truth and the unconscious (concealment) are not the "kernel" hidden under the "shell" of the narrative account, requiring revelation through decipherment and cracking in such formations of learning? Isn't it possible that hermeneutics is no longer the scalpel of dissection to expose or disclose the hidden in such configurations? That the "acts" of literature, in such literary labyrinths do not demand reading of "inscriptions"?

[1] For a critical unravelling of the narrative of European heritage, cf. Lacoue-Labarthe (1993a, pp. 1–13).

As we have seen earlier, no literary inquirer (*lakshanika*) offers any narrative plot of any *kavya*. When narratives appear in such a cultural configuration, they are measured for their performative, contextual efficacy and not for their pregnant profundity. A performative provides the condition for responsive action—and the response can come forth as a varied composition from what one is exposed to or what one receives.

To be sure, both concatenated narratives and discrete and allusive narratemes permeate Sanskrit *vangmaya*. But nowhere do they become a substantive source or a privileged form for exemplifying any normative mode of being; nor do they circulate as verifiable descriptive accounts anchored in reality. No wonder Sanskrit reflective traditions contain compositions that are completely devoid of narratives or even narratemes (in the *sutra* genre, for example, of Panini or Apastambha, and other genres such as *Pratishakhya*s etc.) over a very long period of time. That is, these compositions do not seem to consider the narrative either as a pedagogical or illustrative technique for at least over a millennium before the Common Era.

Sanskrit reflective traditions do not appear to sustain the heritage on the basis of semantically pregnant narratives or coherently developed accounts of meaning. When narratives do emerge (in a relatively more sustained way) and proliferate, they are persistently interrupted by non-narrative, non-thematic or content-less compositions. These interruptions come either as *upadesha*s, *sukti*s—(contextually deployed) utterances with general applicability or transferability across contexts. The particular and the generalizable alternate and change their status without any universalizing urge. Yajnavalkya's *upadesha* to Maitreyi about the mode of attaining *ananda* is imparted in a specific context—but has the efficacy to move beyond that context. This non-narrative *upadesha* puts an end to the narrateme of this conversation in the Upanishad—for we never get to know the destiny of Maitreyi.

As the non-narrative current does not conform to or confirm any unified thematic it is difficult to elicit any single, coherent (moral or political) orientation to the narratives in any composition. They are discrete elements released in a non-narrative current.

But when narratemes, allusions to unelaborated events or accounts, get expanded into narratives, when they lend themselves to elaboration even in the eminently non-narrative Sanskrit traditions (as it happens with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* or even the *purana*s), how do they come about in the composition? What happens to the epistemic status of the narrative? Does narrative forge ethical and identitarian motifs even in these mnemocultural traditions after the "narrative turn"? In order to address these questions we shall here engage with the most traveled and "translated" composition of the Sanskrit tradition: the *Panchatantra*. From Pehlevi to Arabic, from Hebrew to Latin, from Latin to French to Greek, and into more than 50 non-Indian languages this composition has travelled extensively in the last two millennia.

5.2 The Double Strand

The *Panchatantra* is offered as the essence of imports of all the *shastra*s: *sakalartha shastra saram*. In the *Panchatantra*, the scholar Vishnusharma promises to the king that he would make his sons, the princes, learned in *nitishastra*. As is the case with the compositions in Sanskrit *vangmaya*, the *Panchatantra* anamnesically recalls the earlier *shastrakara*s; it recapitulates all the significant figures such as Vyasa, Parasara, Manu, Chanakya, Brhaspati, Sukra and others. We are intimated at the very beginning that this composition was heard thus over generations:

Tatyatha anushruyate

(Thus it was heard—repeatedly—over generations)

(Here, what is being referred to is the account of how the *Panchatantra* came into being, the conditions that led to its composition; that this account is mnemoculturally circulated over undefined period of time.)

This mnemocultural work is composed as a delighting and entertaining learning:

Sarasvati vinodam karishyami[2]

Spurning material temptations offered by the king, Vishnusarma tells him that his learning is not for sale (*na ham vidya vikrayam … karomi*) and that he has no use for even a hundred villages, if the king were to gift them; for he is someone who has overcome all the ephemeral, worldly allurements. The resulting composition is said to have become famous in the entire sphere of earth (*bhutale pravruttam*).

Nitishastra is not a "moral science" here. It is rather a strategic science concerning "action knowledge".[3] Action knowledge is not any explanatorily intelligible account of actions; that is, it is neither a rational nor theoretical reckoning nor justification of an action. It rather suggests strategies to survive or act in situations of difficulty, adversity or opportunity. These strategies (how to confront when the enemy is mightier than oneself; how to escape or save oneself when caught by the enemy? How to terminate an unnatural friendship? How to live with or befriend those unlike us?) are lessons in learning. This composition—*nitishastra*—does not progress or move as an accumulated, developing or graded account

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[2] I have used the Sanskrit-Telugu bilingual version of the *Panchatantram* (2009), vol.1, p. 5.

[3] I am indebted to the work of S.N. Balagangadhara for this phrase (although I use the term later on in a slightly different way from his). In a formidable work of original theoretical significance, Balagangadhara configures Indian singularity on the basis of "action knowledge"—the capability to learn from modes of doing. As ideas can generate ideas, actions too can bring forth actions in distinct ways, argues Balagangadhara. This theoretical vantage enables him to contrast the reflective difference of India (Asia) with that of the West (which he configures as oriented towards theoretical or propositional knowledge). Balagangadhara escapes the trap of binarism by contending that action and theory are cultural universals. However, his main contention is that cultural difference can be configured on the basis of the emphasis that cultures lay on these orientations. Cf. Balagangadhara (1987: pp. 77–107).

of learning. Nor does it come across as a realization or application of an existing moral code. There is no genetic principle that regulates the strategies of action. Similarly there is no certainty that any specific strategy of movement or living on is justified or condemned as a paradigm. The *Panchatantra* can thus, more appropriately, be called a compendium of action knowledge. It offers open-ended action-responses or responsive actions and their possibilities in concrete and individuated existential moments.

The first Tantra (which shows the rise and fall of an unnatural friendship—friendship between a lion and a bull) ends with Damanaka (Dimma in Persian and Arabic versions) reconciling the remorseful Pingalaka to the situation (of the bereavement of a friend) and justifies the killing. He even quotes the Gita without mentioning it. Within no time Pingalaka abandons his remorse and mourning and rules the domain with Damanaka as his minister. Now this does not induce one to the claim that winning is the only virtue—irrespective of consequences or means of winning. As will be shown below, Karataka's (Kalila in Persian and Arabic versions) onslaught on Damanaka remains unanswered by the latter.

If the first Tantra denies friendship with the stranger (unlike us), and if the stronger wins in the alliance with the stranger, in the third Tantra the weak uses the ruse of hospitality to defeat the strong. But it is precisely the motif of hospitality that brings unlikely strangers together in the second Tantra, whereas in the third Tantra this very motif becomes a ruse that brings the vengeful crow and the powerful owls together for the latter's destruction. The guest betrays the host. The codes of hospitality, friendship, receive heterogeneous implications as they are contextually and strategically put to work. Although codes like hospitality and friendship may have universal significance—there is no guarantee that they would be uniformly effective across the context or that they remain immune from contamination.

The fourth Tantra too deals with the question of friendship of unlikely beings—meat-eater and fruit or vegetable eater—crocodile and monkey. But here too friendship is just a ruse or trap, to deceive and capture the weak by the mighty. Yet, after a protracted argumentation in which the crocodile moves from the beguiling strategy to genuine friendship some reconciliation takes place. Unlikely beings maintain difference and distance in their modes of being but live together. The fifth Tantra once again takes the thematic of friendship—this time between intra-species friendship—among humans. Even friendship has an internal limit beyond which it cannot be extended; the limit is set by the actions and their effects. Since action is the agent, the consequences of action will have to be endured and lived by all those who are involved in the action. The individual emerges as the effect of actions—known and unknown—and the instance of existence is never an isolated, autonomous moment of action. All instantiations of the scene of action and actors are deeply but indeterminably related to intractable duration and recursive existence (we shall explore this question of existential temporality more substantially in the section on the *Mahabharata*). No friend or no proxy can play the substitute or surrogate for one's actions and one's endowments. The *Panchatantra* offers an interminable learning scene of action knowledge.

The composition of the *Panchatantra* is made up of a double structure which consists of non-narrative verses and narrative prose passages and dialogues (or *samvadas*). The non-narrative verses, however, far exceed the prose narratives in the composition. The verses not only disallow any thematic continuity within and across the five Tantras; they also disallow any narrative unity across the composition. Countering of the frame theme occurs not just in narrative passages but also in non-narrative verses as well. The narratives are discrete even when they are enframed in specific Tantras; that is, there is no cumulative, aggregative effect or affect of these two rather contrary compositional elements. Frames cannot decisively determine the destiny of the discrete elements within the frame.

It might appear that each Tantra maintains a thematic unity and that all the verses and passages within the Tantra are contained by the frame of the Tantra. But a considerable number of counter-narratives—narratives that bristle against the narrative thematic—keep emerging within the Tantra and frame. In fact, throughout the first Tantra, for instance, Karataka the elderly fox is not merely sceptical about Damanaka (the wily fox who conspires all the time), but unleashes a tirade of reproach as the friends—Pingalaka and Sanjeevaka—enter a fierce fight. The reproach is precisely against the thematic of antinomies of friendship. Similarly the Tantra two is given the thematic frame of gift of friendship. A significant part of the Tantra is devoted to sustain skepticism about unlikely or cross-species friendship. Narrative passages and non-narrative verses alternate and counter the thematic of gift of friendship.

The double structure of narrative and non-narrative compositional elements and the thematic/counter-thematic accounts are sustained by an ancient vigorous communication current in the composition. This current is alluded to in the pervasive sonic universe of Sanskrit (*vangmaya*) as a *vakovakya* compositional strategy—a mode of responding to an utterance by another utterance; this is a sort of dialogue-utterance. Every utterance presupposes or is exposed to the possibility of a counter-utterance and offers or performs a speech act. This utterance can come forth in a prose or verse form. This mode of composing the world of utterance can be traced back to the Upanishadic genre definitively—but goes beyond into the Vedic compositional forms as well. The well-known *vakovakya* dialogues of Nachiketa (in the *Kathopanishad*), Yajnavalkya (in the *Bruhadaranyaka*), among the organs of the body (in the *Kenopanishad*), and among the sages, teachers and pupils in various other Upanishads clearly indicate the ancient lines of this communication strategy. The technique of dialogue-utterance prevails across all genres of Sanskrit compositions over millennia. Various genres, apart from the Upanishads, such as *sutra*s, *darshana*s, *purana*s, *shastra*s come forth as weavings of the dialogue-utterance.

All the narrative and non-narrative strands are woven in the *Panchatantra* with the *vakovakya* threads. These threads serve the strategies of elaboration and condensation of the varied thematics of the composition. Yet these threads neither gather to weave a strong unified plot or narrative nor do they provide a connecting yarn across the multi-narrative/counter-narrative composition of the *Panchatantra*. Curiously despite apparent proliferation of narrative yarns, the *Panchatantra* is

more attuned to a non-narrative impulse than to a narrative consummation. The sheer number of non-narrative verses (*shloka*s) far exceeds the narrative passages in the composition. There are about (depending on the version of the composition, though) 78 narrative passages in the text, whereas the non-narrative verses across the Tantras run over a thousand.

Although the double structure of verse and narrative prose strands is common to all the Tantras, there is no symmetry between the verses, whether across the Tantras or across narratives. The first Tantra, for example, has 461 verses, whereas the second 196, the third 263, the fourth 86 and the fifth 96 verses. Similarly if the number of verses between the story I: 1 and I: 2 are about 95, between I: 2 and I: 3 are 24; although in all the Tantras verses far exceed the narratives, there are narrative passages too that are not interspersed with any verses; further it must be noted that in almost all cases the narrative accounts are most economically composed, the stories are very briefly recounted.

However, the economy of narration has little to do with the actual length of space and time that a story occupies in the Tantras. This happens because the actual movement of the narrative (prose) passages is constantly interrupted by non-narrative verses on the one hand and other narratives within the narratives on the other. Towards the end of Tantra I, for example, Damanaka tells the story of the bird Tittibha (story 12). This story is interrupted in turns by stories 13, 14, and 15—but the number of verses that interrupt these stories runs into 47. As pointed out earlier, the number of verses that interrupt the stories runs into 1,102 in all; in contrast, the number of stories runs into about 78 in the entire composition. This asymmetric relation between the non-narrative and narrative components of the composition on the one hand and the impossibility of unifying the narratives across the Tantras for identifying a narrative or thematic coherence in the narrative on the other hand, vindicates the non-privileging of the narrative strand.

The de-emphasization or non-valorization of the narrative appears to have emerged from more ancient compositional sources of Sanskrit *vangmaya*. As pointed out earlier, the Vedic compositions are eminently *anakhyayika*s. No one recites the Vedic hymns for their narrative elements. It must not, however, be assumed that the Sanskrit tradition spares no space for narrative or figural elements. The *vangmaya* brims with figural, analogical and imaginative compositions. The space for a linear, teleological unfolding of a narrative line is drastically reduced in this *vangmaya* for at least two millennia before the Common Era. In other words, what can be termed the "narrative" genre can be arguably said to emerge in the early centuries around the Common Era. But even this genre can be said to move within the bounds sketched by the more fundamental non-narrative force that disseminated the genres of Sanskrit *vangmaya*.

The *Panchatantra* is a singular emergence from such a reflective performative tradition. No wonder the *Panchatantra* with its double weave remains an incomparable work of reflection. No Indologist (neither Hertel nor Edgerton) has been able to offer any comparative account of the singularity of the dual structure of the *Panchatantra* with any work elsewhere in the last 200 years. None of these (Indological) accounts moves beyond the origin-seeking, philological, textual

analysis of the composition, its translational migrations, transformations of individual stories in transit, its alleged moralistic or Machiavellian nature (which mainly focus only on the first Tantra) and the assimilation of individual stories in other literary traditions.

As can be noticed from Edgerton's work (1915, pp. 51–52, pp. 66–67), the force of the non-narrative was felt only in India even in the multiple renderings of this composition. The non-narrative element is either simply eliminated, reduced to prose passages, or grossly packaged as moralistic counsel. Burzoe, the Persian physician who began the transfer and translation of the *Panchatantra* in the 6th century, while focusing mainly on the first Tantra, seems to have reduced the multiple weaves and strands of the structure to a standard conversation between a mighty ("despotic") king (Dabselem—perhaps Burzoe gave the name) and a stereotypically framed wise man (Bidpai). This misses out completely the more nuanced figuration of the king (Pingalaka) and his shaky status, differential but strategic alliance between the king and his courtiers, the strategems of gaining favours and friends and the varied articulation of cultivated and endowed traces among heterogeneous species of beings.

After the moralistic medieval appropriations and renderings of the Persian and Arabic versions, Lafontaine's appropriations give no clue to his awareness of the complex structure of the composition. He merely abstracts and appropriates individual stories. In a way, this most travelled and most translated composition of the world seems to have remained unmoving and untranslated. It looks as if the *Panchatantra* is not just an incomparable text but it is also an untranslatable one. The force of the non-narrative idiom and reflection seems to resist all efforts of transferral and translation. It is in such an aporetic situation (untranslatable but translated) that one must struggle to rethink this singular composition against the grain of Indological, Persian and Arabic claims over this composition.

5.3 Disarticulations

What, then, is the relation between the non-narrative and narrative in the *Panchatantra*? It is a relationship of non-relation. They seem to be intimately related; one (narrative) seems to "illustrate" the other (the non-narrative), concretize the abstract. Yet, however strongly or organically they may appear to relate to each other, the textual context in no way binds or bonds them together ineluctably. Neither the narratives nor the verses require each other for their legibility or survival. The pattern of abstraction and appropriation of the *Panchatantra* over one and a half millennia demonstrates this clearly: the stories of the *Panchatantra* can be wrenched out from the non-narrative palimpsest, and they can be translated and anthologized. Equally, only the verses can also be gathered and anthologized without the stories; there can be a *samhita* of all the non-narrative *shloka*s exclusively. (Though no Persian or European seems to have undertaken such a task.) All the verses of the composition reflect imports of general significance. They are not bound to any specific spatio-temporal situations; that is, they are

context-transcendent utterances. Take, for example, out of hundreds of verses, a singular composition of two lines:

Upakarishu yah sadhuh sadhutve tasya ko gunah
apakarishu yah sadhuh sa sadhuh sadbhiruchyate

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 1, p. 116)

(Where is the virtue in doing good to someone who is helpful? The one who does good to a harmful one is regarded as a virtuous person by the respected elders.)

This aphoristic composition on forgiveness, though it is uttered in a specific context, can circulate all contexts of time and space and continue to be a communicable performative.

Similarly:

Vidvatvancha nrupatvancha naiva tulyam kadachana,
Svadeshe pujyate raja vidvan sarvatra pujyate

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 1, p. 116)

(The learned savant and king can never be equals. The king is revered in his own kingdom; whereas the learned is respected everywhere.)

This utterance proclaiming incomparable difference between the ruler and the learned certainly has context-free significance. Such verses are not circumscribed by any historical temporal references. Two centuries of Indology's efforts to squeeze out historic-temporal, archaeo-biological referents from the Sanskrit *vangmaya* yielded more frustration (on the part of the inquirer) than any determinable relation between the *vangmaya* and the referential order. Such inquires reveal more of the inquirer's epistemic-cultural mindset.

The context here, however, cannot be confused with a determined historic-political reality as such. The contexts that *Panchatantra* weaves out are experiential situations in life—situations which require action, reflection and decision. The multiple contexts which unfold here concern matters that perennially confront one in life—matters such as friendship, treachery, betrayal, enmity, infidelity, hospitality, forgiveness, violence, beings-in-difference, living together differently, might and right, and force of the weak, etc., and many more. As it is impossible to delimit and exhaust the situations that confront and challenge us in life, so it is impossible to include all; there is no closure to the contexts of life that the *Panchatantra* exposes us to.

If living on is responding to interminable contexts that we are exposed to, the *Panchatantra* weaves its double strand of response in each existential situation. The non-narrative and narrative strands bring forth the response. Just as life cannot be reduced to just one context, the *Panchatantra* neither privileges any specific context of life nor does it valorize any particular weave or response. In other words, it is not possible to idealize any specific weave of response or the type of life that the *Panchatantra* offers. Yet, each context of response comes forth as a concrete, material instantiation of certain imports of the context-transcendent generalization figured in the non-narrative verse. That is, what can surpass the spatio-temporal circumscription of the contexts seems to get anchored by the

singular context of the narrative. This is achieved throughout in the composition of the *Panchatantra* by means of what can be called the figural or analogical logic.

As suggested earlier there is no statistical or quantitative norm that regulates the braided flow of the double strand. They are uneven and asymmetric in their drift across narrative contexts. There does not appear to be any internal logic that requires the drift of non-narrative verses to give way to narrative passages in prose at specific points. Why should a narrative come forth at a specific point of the flow? Is there logic to this timing in the drift of the verse strand and the interruption of the prose yarn? In principle the double structure of this composition can go on multiplying and braiding the strands ceaselessly. But why do they cross in those specific nodes where they do? It is for sure that they interrupt and defer their flow. For the context-transcendent drift of the non-narrative strand is anchored and contextually bound by the concrete, singular narrative. Similarly, the particular lived situation or experience in the narrative passage is interrupted by the non-narrative force that can drift beyond the determined contexts.

The contrary pulls of this weave does not seem to have received attention in the Euro-American narratological accounts and philosophical disquisitions on the narrative; these narratological inquiries seldom move beyond the narrative literary models of European past (Homer, Hesiod, and Plato). As the Sanskrit *vangmaya* remains indifferent to exclusive meta-level conceptual universalizations and historiographical reflections on the evolution of recurring notions, it is difficult to expect any explanatory clues from within the *Panchatantra* to address the questions stated above.

Here, it appears necessary to differentiate generalizing utterances from universalized conceptual formulations. We see the preponderance of the former in Sanskrit *vangmaya* (as contextually relevant *nirvachanas*) and the latter in the post-Socratic European thought (beginning with Aristotle). The generalizing utterances appear as context-transcending, aphoristic formulations emerging from specific contexts. Almost all the verses in the *Panchatantra* appear in this mode. Sometimes such utterances come forth as glosses or *nirvachana*s—economically forged elucidations or annotations. But in both cases these specific formulations of singular reflections—although they get circulated—do not acquire any narrative status in the Sanskrit *vangmaya;* other creative, reflective work offers its own compositions and formulations about the received notions. In other words, a certain kind of non-conceptual generalization that transcends contextual binds but emerges from specific contextual (compositional) situation weaves the mnemotext.

Whereas universalized concepts are calculated to or aimed at abstracting context-transcendent formulations from their allusive, elliptic, aphoristic, figural, in a word mnemocultural weave; once such constative formulations are accomplished, philosophical inquiries are exclusively conducted only through or by means of such conceptual grids. Generalizing utterances do not necessarily demand exclusivist or oppositional (constative/performative, concept/metaphor) categories.

When we closely examine the aphoristic verses that precede every story we see a common pattern of address that evokes a question. As a response to a question, a narrative is offered. The verse before the narrative in each instance continues to

have a context-transcendent figural generality. But in this verse the aphoristic utterance is combined with a specific proper name or a particular existential situation. In other words, what can transcend the spatio-temporal binds gets woven into or anchored by something that is context specific. The combination of context-free and context-sensitive utterances is achieved by analogical pairing. In other words, the preceding verse lends its narrateme to be elaborated. The verse that inaugurates the first narrative in the composition weaves this figural logic thus:

Avyapareshu vyaparam yo narah kartumichchati
Sa eva nidhanam yati kilotpativa vanarah

(*Panchatantram*, 2009, vol. 1, p. 14)

(The man who indulges in unwarranted activity will perish like the monkey that pulled out the nail from the wedge.)

Like all aphoristic utterances it combines the general and the particular. There is nothing in such a verse that demands narrative elaboration. The analogy (*like the monkey*) becomes a part of the idiom of the language. Idioms, defying temporal binds, communicate the most elaborate in the most condensed form. What actually lends the analogical pairing to weave a yarn is the question it provokes. The interlocutor at a certain point in the flow of non-narrative verses raises the interruptive question or performs a speech act. Once the figural logic alludes to a concrete (or concretizable) situation or experience it provokes the question:

Kathametat? So bravit

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 1, p. 14)

(Tell, How is that? Do tell me.)

This performative speech act brings forth the narrative in response. The entire composition of the *Panchatantra* moves on this performative and figural logic. The narrative itself is packed off in the most economic way in two brief prose passages; then begins a protracted non-narrative exchange of aphoristic utterances. After about 94 verses without any narrative content that the 95th verse, through figural pairing lends itself to another narrative:

Na shabdamatrad bhitavyam. api cha:
(Just a sound should not frighten one, as is said:)
Purvameva maya jnatam punametaddhi medasa
Anupravishya vijnatam yavachcharma cha daru cha

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 1, p. 38)

(I first thought that the drum was filled with fat. But once I made a whole and entered I realized that there was only leather at the top and all around inside just wood)

The second line with the allusion to a specific structure occasions the speech act (*kathametat*) and then flows the story of the jackal who greedily mistook a drum as filled with meat. The next story appears after about twenty verses and so on and so forth runs the double weave of the composition.

Although the two strands interrupt and contextually braid each other, it is not difficult (if not impossible) to specify why a narrative emerges at a specific place—

or why an aphoristic verse comes forth interrupting a narrative. What complicates this difficulty even more is the fact that a narrative could have emerged from any aphoristic verse at any point and not just at the specific places where it emerges. For, all the non-narrative verses—even at a general level—actually are impelled by motifs that have critical bearing on the existential context. The first Tantra is replete with aphoristic verses on the motifs of friendship, the characteristics of a king, relations with others high and low, women, desire, *jati*, betrayal and just any kind of situation and relation in life. In other words, each of the aphoristic verses can space itself into a narrative, or in each verse glimmers the trace of a narrateme.

Several verses make specific references to *puranic* and *itihasic* motifs and name *puranic* figures—and at each of these nodes a narrative can spring forth. As there is no privileged or privilegeable narrative, there is no ideal moment from which narrative manifests in the composition. In other words, the verses—drawing on the more ancient aphoristic and content-free energies of the Sanskrit *vangmaya*—seem to value conserving the syllables of narrative procreation. The asymmetry between the narrative and non-narrative verses appears to be epistemically regulated, or, in other words, unregulated (*niyamarahitam*, as Mammata would say).

The difference of the double strand manifests in yet another and more interesting way. Each of the narrative strands is woven in specific situations, contextually by a specific figure of fable. That is, narratives are woven by existential beings exposed to specific events in life. We do not get to know the genealogy of the story—although it bleeps as a cursor already in the figural weave of the aphoristic verse, whereas, in contrast to the narrative strand, all non-narrative strands are actually citations. All the aphoristic verses are recited as the sayings of the learned (*vijna*s). They drift as immemorial utterances, context-transcendent citations—which no anchor can permanently or definitively ground.

As each of these verses is recited as the utterance of the renowned elders, and learned savants of the immemorial past, they have testimonial (*pramana*) status in the Indian reflective traditions. As *pramana*s they can be brought forth contextually to justify claims and assertions, while the narrative does not seem to gain such a status. At least in the two millennia before the Common Era, narrative per se, narratives unbraided with content-less verses, do not appear in Sanskrit *vangmaya*—and none is accorded with or viewed as possessing any general, exemplary import. It must be pointed out here, however, that as the narrative yarn in fact appears as an amplification of a strain that can already be traced in the aphoristic citations, one cannot plot the two strands as rigorously categorical opposites. They are a sort of dissimilar twins with different features and functions, but shared traits articulated variedly.

5.4 Dis-Enclosures

In the *Panchatantra* composition, the double strand weave subsumes all other "fictional" categories. Thus, the usual character analysis tells us little about the more radical compositional strategy of narrative and non-narrative braiding.

Further irrespective of the significance and role played in existential situations, every single life form in the *Panchatantra* is capable of weaving the double strand (or is woven by such strands). Thus the lion, fox, crocodile, tortoise, frog, sparrow, strand-bird, thief, king, weaver, washer-man, mouse and insect—each one articulates the double weave of the composition.

Secondly, each of these figures of life articulates the weave to emphasize or affirm its own response in an existential situation. Thus, the falcon would justify its killing of the mouse and the sage his protection of the latter; the jackal his conspiracy and betrayal of trust and the crow his determination to befriend the mouse; the sweeper with his hurt pride harming the minster and the minister repairing his attitude. Almost every cordial sentiment and relation, the *Panchatantra* shows and says, can be turned into a mask of deception for meeting the existential situation one is exposed to or finds oneself in. Thus friendship, loyalty, trust, fidelity, renunciation, conjugal bond, and any such idealizable motif can be put to infelicitous function, can be put to counter (or counterfeit) use. None of these motifs, the composition shows, can be accorded unequivocal status or claimed to be absolute certitudes. Thus the fox Damanaka seeks justification for his moves all the time (of establishing friendship and destroying it) by composing contextually appropriate aphoristic generalities, narratives and counter-narratives (in response to Karataka's chastising tales and content-less verses). For such counterfeit uses each of the figures of life contextually and competently weaves the double strand of the composition.

As a consequence of this interruptive alternation of narrative and non-narrative strands, and the mutating "original" and counterfeit elements, it is not possible to impose any focal perspectivization on the composition. Although at various points narrational framing does embed the specific articulations of the double strand, it is impossible to forge a continual perspective across various weavings of the strands. If the first Tantra shows the stratagem of betraying friendship, the second Tantra affirms precisely the motif of friendship (of the eater and the eaten). If the third Tantra articulates the betrayals (or perils) of hospitality, across all the Tantras hospitality as a cherished ideal is also advanced. This, however, does not mean that each Tantra is dedicated to focalize a particular motif. On the contrary, each Tantra is composed of narratives and counter-narratives, non-narratives and counter-non-narratives.

Each Tantra in this composition is pushed and pulled by pregnant heterogeneity—and the locus at which each Tantra pauses or incurs a caesura does not signify any decisive closure that would emblematize the position of the Tantra as such. Thus although the first Tantra ends (rather abruptly) with the killing of the bull Sanjeevaka and the jackal Damanaka gaining the position of minister, the other cautioning fox Karataka unleashes a blistering attack on Damanaka's unworthy life. This unsparing tirade, however, does not deter Damanaka in his machinations—and when the Tantra tapers off Damanaka remains alone with the lion. There is no narratorial gloss on this situation where the narrative "ends." Here it must be pointed out that more than this thematic terminus what is important is that the weave of the double strand is paused after Karataka's tirade against Damanaka's deeds. Unlike in every other situation throughout the Tantra where

Damanaka counters all of Karataka's cautioning, skeptical moves, here Damanaka comes forth with nothing for a counter attack. The weave of the double strand is halted by a brief narratorial terminus of the tale.

Given the interminable force of the double weave there is no internally justifiable reason for terminating the weave by making Damanaka silent (especially when the latter all the time projected himself as the learned, *vijna*). What the composition does here is to make a provisional halt of the double weave and this caesura cannot be treated as a decisive closure. For the weave begins immediately in the second Tantra with the non-narrative strand. And the second Tantra itself moves like a counter-weave against the thematic of betrayal of friendship and affirms (although through a series of threats that internally resist) the motif of the gift of friendship. Yet, the motif of friendship that appears to receive focus here does not find any continuity (not just in the second Tantra itself) but in the rest of the Tantras as well.

All the Tantras offer only a provisional halt to a certain weave. And these caesuras cannot be made continuous in order to consolidate a thematic unity in the Tantras. In fact there is absolutely no justifiable reason why the order of the Tantras is arranged the way it exists in various versions today. Even if one were to change the order in any which way one wishes—the composition suffers little. For there is nothing that "evolves" in the composition. In other words, as suggested earlier, the double strand of the mutually interruptive weave of the *Panchatantra* does not culminate in a narrative unity or closure. The narratives and the non-narrative verses and their counter moves can proliferate weaving their strands infinitely.

The *Panchatantra* permits privileging neither a beginning nor an end. The "story-line", if one can call it that, of the *Panchatantra* is simple but empty. A learned teacher is asked to teach foolish princes to make them worldly-wise. The opening frame never closes off and we never get to know whatever has happened to the teaching and the taught. More crucially we do not get to know what can be learnt from this interruptive pedagogic model. That is, the *Panchatantra* does not offer an easily determined content for imparting. Nor can we simply reduce the addressees of the Tantras to the obtuse princes.

With multiple narratives and multiple interruptive frames, the *Panchatantra* denies a narrative unity and does not communicate any coherent identity to the composition. Without a privileged beginning or end, it arrays heterogeneous instances of singular existences. Their occasional and instantial convergence, coming together, cannot be taken as a decisive normative pattern that ought to prevail universally. Thus, the existential experiment in living together of unlikely beings and species (the eater and the eaten, the grass-eater and the meat-eater, humans and animals—in short living with those who are not like us) that goes on in the *Panchatantra* cannot be said to propound an "ought" in living—that is, a normative ideal mode of being.

Nowhere in the Tantras does on find a straight line that declares a paradigm for living. What one notices is a persistent enframing or delimiting of any mode of being that comes forth. In short, the composition—with its double weave does not

declare a universalized mode of being. Consequently, the question of how to live remains an interminable inquiry—an inquiry which does not valorize a narrative of living. Thus, multiple and polyvalent modes of being may be contemporaneous but none gets celebrated as the only covetable model of being. Ignoring the complex multi-frame double strand of weaving, when one reads the *Panchatantra* as a "political" or "moral" philosophy one is merely, reductively projecting (internally contested) Damanaka's ways of going about as the position valorized by the entire composition in its totality. First of all, the composition, as pointed out earlier, does not have a unifiable whole with evolving stages. In a way, the *Panchatantra* is a composition of multiple micronarratives interrupted by non-narrative verses—a composition that offers no overarching totalizing perspective as such.

The aphoristic non-narrative verses allude to countless narratemes but only some of which receive minimial narrative reckoning. Although the contours of a plot can be elicited from the composition—but as there is no governing *telos* across all the narratives—the *Panchatantra* as a "whole" cannot be said to contain a plot. Does this mean that in such a mutually interruptive reflective composition where heterogeneous existential situations move on and anyone and everyone appears worthy enough to live on, where no single one appears to gain a normative status, does this mean that such a composition has nothing "positive" to offer? Does it mean that such a composition justifies any mode of being (that of a thief, of deceptive women, betraying friends etc.)? Can a coherent meaning be elicited from such a work of reasoning imagination? If there is a position at all, and if it can be called a position, in the *Panchatantra* it is that of a cultural indifference to any mode of being, including the one which one endures or lives in. The question of seeking a meaning or investing a meaning in any mode of being or tracing or consolidation of an identity from one's own existence remains suspended in such a reflective imagination.

As the scenes of action are immeasurable and as no particular scenario can be accorded exemplary status, no narrative can exemplify the ethical position of the composition. The relation between ethics, narrative and identity that we find theorized in contemporary European thought stands in stark contrast to the action knowledge rendered by the composition of the *Panchatantra*. As plot or emplotment is the cohering line of actions of individuals for Aristotle, narration of action or memory provides the individual with his identity.[4]

Emplotment is a synthesis of the heterogeneous.[5] Narrative implies, argues Adriana Caverero, a desire for meaning. Without such a desire and narrative what remains is an "intolerable sequence of events" (Hannah Arendt quoted in Caverero 2000, p. 2). All narratives are, in the ultimate analysis, aimed at ascertaining identity: the desire to answer the question: who am I? In this reckoning narrative

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[4] Incidentally, the Greek word for plot (in Aristotle's use) is *muthos*. As one can see, by the time of Aristotle the term seems to be cleansed of all its theatrocratic appurtenances. It becomes a signifier of a perspectivizing narrative orientation.

[5] For Ricoeur (1991: pp. 20–21), plot provides an "intelligible whole".

appears to be structurally Oedipal. “Is not storytelling always the search for one’s own origin, to tell of one’s own troubles with the Law, to enter into a dialectic with emotion and hate?… [E]very tale (every revelation of truth) is, a *mise-en-scène* of the Father (absent, hidden, hypothesized)” (Roland Barthes, quoted in Caverero 2000, p. 14).[6] The desire that drives one for the narrative, argues Caverero, is the desire for the unity of the self in the form of a story: “The desire orients both the expectations of the one who is narrated and the work of the one who narrates” (Cavarero 2000, p. 41). Narratives are thus seen as vectors of self-formation and self-representation.[7]

If plot or emplotment is an ordering or shape-giving act emerging out of heterogeneous incidents and events; if plot is a configurational act in discrete events and occurrences; if plot or narrative is a passage from individual, unrelated time to an extended durational temporality, how should one comprehend narratives that are woven into compositions that are intensely non-narrative, compositions that even when they appear to offer generalizing utterances do not lend themselves to a determinate structure of configuration?

As we have argued so far, the Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions for nearly two millennia remained indifferent to narrative elaborations of their thought. Consequently, when narrative elaboration of the nodes of narratemes takes place, the emergent narratives get structured by the non-narrative impulse. Narratives proliferating in such compositional ambience—woven by multiple strands of sonic-melodic utterances (as in the case of the Upanishads or *puranas*)—may not culminate in or consolidate a unified identity-affirming structure. That is, the urge for emplotment apparent in the very formation of the narrative (in European arguments), does not necessarily guarantee such a self-revealing or self-fashioning identity in Sanskrit traditions. The non-narrative impulse interrupts and disperses narrative unities (as narrateme clinamen) even as the former braids and disseminates across proliferating narratives.

With the emergence of narrative elaboration, in the *itihasa*s, *purana*s and *kavya*s—an emergence that takes place within the polyvocal compositional modes—we notice the drift of multiple narratives in these compositions. Such heterogeneous narrative structure suggests the perennial possibility of undermining any unifying focalization or perspectivization in these compositions. There is neither a law nor sovereign power that can regulate such heterogeneous singularities in Sanskrit reflective formations.

Cultures that seek continuities between memory, narrative, ethics and identity seem to be guided by such normative or sovereign force. Sovereignty is the affirmation of self and its force before anything else. It is such a conception of self that articulates itself in institutionalized forms of the church, monarchy, state, and

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[6] Differing with Barthes’ psychoanalytic account, Cavarero (2000, p. 14) goes on to see in Sophocles (rather than in Freud) the “life-story [of Oedipus] that reveals to him who he is….”.

[7] This is precisely the credo of German Romanticism which structures modernity in European intellectual history. Biography and autobiography are the celebrated offspring of this credo. Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe (1993b: pp. 7–11).

nation, argued Derrida. Such "ipsocentric" structure which articulates the principle of legitimate sovereignty has a very long theo-political genealogy (from Ouranos, Chronos, Zeus, to the God of Judaism and Christianity) points out Derrida. Ipseity—the certitude of one's capacity ("*I can*")—takes the form of force, power and mastery over what it encounters: it is the "first, ultimate and supreme source of every 'reason of the strongest' and the right granted to force or the force granted to law" (Derrida 2005, pp. 11–21). The legacy of this formidable ipsocratic tradition can be seen in the affirmation of continuities between memory, narrative, ethics and identity. Without such perspectivizing or regulating vector, this tradition of thinking implies, chaos or meaninglessness prevails; it sets a hierarchy between cosmos (as ordered universe) and chaos (disorder, confusion) and impels one to choose a determined option.

When European (or American) academics write about Sanskrit compositions, their readings largely derive from this ipsocratic background. Mnemotexts of other traditions are invaded with questions about power, politics, ethics, history on the one hand and the structure, plot, and the unity of the compositions on the other hand. If Hertel and Edgerton thought that the *Panchatantra* exemplified Machiavellian doctrine (of winning by any means—"a highly unmoral and Machiavellian variety"), Olivelle (1997, pp. xi–xl) thinks that the text represents patriarchal "macho" politics and ethics of ancient India; if the text is seen at one point as reducing women to sexual objects, at another point it is a homosexual work (for it portrays only male characters who are single); its structure is uneven, but shows an evolution from fantasy to reality; for Edgerton the text lacks care and consistency because the Hindus cannot sustain "a general principle" with which they start without "looking neither to the right nor to the left." But later he feels that the verses of the text "sum up the philosophy of the whole work" (Edgerton 1915, pp. 50–51). As can be seen from the typical claims, they are symmetrical to the kind of inquiry that guides Sheldon Pollock's venture to construct an intellectual history for India. The mnemotexts of Sanskrit tradition (and other Indian traditions) resist and frustrate such ventures. These readings give clues to the epistemic background of the Euro-American academic. They tell us little about the reflective and creative formations that do not emerge from ipso-centric traditions. They evaluate the epistemically other with the ipsocratic language.

But how do mnemotexts, if they too have compositional strains of narrative, move beyond identitarian problematic? How does situationally responsive action knowledge circumvent consolidations of self-hood? Can we focus on a singular node of the double strand and address these questions? Although literary inquiries in the Sanskrit tradition, as was shown earlier, do not indulge in plot summaries and integrated totalities of a work or narrativize any work for onto-epistemological critiques, it should be possible to advance their general assumptions of the literary in inquiring into a particular node.

This inquiry is in line with the general improvisational orientation of Indian reflective and creative traditions. What follows below is an inquiry into a particular compositional node within the larger weave of the *Panchatantra*. This section offers a focused attention on just one narrative/non-narrative complex from the

third Tantra. Although there are no compelling reasons for choosing this particular tale, it has a bearing on the issues (of identity, context, action knowledge, and compositional weaves) discussed so far in this chapter. This close attention to a discontinuous tale also points to the effectiveness of compositional singularity in incorporating narratives in non-narrative traditions in a fractal node.

5.5 Fables and Certainties

As is well-know, the *Panchatantra* is a fable which like the genre itself, has a definite bearing on the domains of politics, ethics, and literature (essentially in European heritage)[8]; for this composition addresses the fundamental political question: *how to live together with difference, how to live on with the other who is not like us?*

The *Panchatantra* is a complex of nested fables where each nesting contexture offers the condition for a decision—but without any guarantee that any desirable decision is affirmed. Each contexture suggests the consequences of such dis-avowed conditions. All the nesting contextures, it can be argued, deal with "*politics of friendship*" (a crucial theme of a major work of Derrida [cf. 1997]).[9] One of such enframing nests is related to a battle between Crows and Owls in the third Tantra. The fable chosen from the nest for our purpose here is about a sage and a mouse. A sage, during one of his routine ritual performances rescues a baby mouse from the talons of a hawk. The sage takes pity on the baby mouse and with his miraculous powers turns the baby animal into a girl and offers her to his childless wife. Under great parental affection the girl comes of age.

As she reaches the critical age in her life, the sage and his wife deliberate on her marriage. The sage decides to offer his daughter the best choice of bridegrooms. Once again with his miraculous powers he invites the sun-god (considered the mightiest) and asks his daughter whether she would like to marry the sun-god. The daughter refuses the all pervasive effulgent god stating that the heat radiating from the god could melt even hard looks. The sage in turn asks the sun-god to name another person, mightier than himself. The sun promptly declares that the

[8] For revival of the fable and its distinct relation to the absolutist monarchic regime in the 17th–18th century Europe, cf., Patterson (1991).

[9] In his significant work, *Rogues*, Derrida unravels the filiation between democratic sovereignty and the millennial theogonal, ipsocratic political traditions of Europe. While exposing the patriarchal, fraternal and androcentric nature of historical democracy (from the Greeks), Derrida (2005: p. 11) speculates on the future of democracy: "the question of democracy to come might take the following form, among others: what is 'living together?' and especially: 'what is a like, a compeer,' 'someone similar or sensible as a human being, a neighbor, a fellow citizen, a fellow creature, a fellow man,' and so on?" Incidentally, this work on political theology of democracy actually begins with a fable about the relation between law and force, might and right, from Lafontaine. Curiously, it is difficult to see a tale that is identical to the Lafontaine's version in the *Panchatantra*.

cloud-god is mightier than he for the latter can simply cover him and deny him his name and existence. The sage invokes the cloud-god and offers the daughter the choice. The daughter denies this match as well and states that this god is too dark and that his roaring thunder frightens her.

The patient and kind sage calmly asks the cloud-god to name a worthy alternative. The cloud-god promptly confesses that the wind-god is more powerful than him, for the wind can blow away any kind of cloud-cluster. The sage repeats the gesture and offers the wind-god to his daughter. The daughter firmly refuses the offer with the plea that this god is too fickle to lead a stable existence for he wanders off unpredictably. The sage asks the wind-god to suggest a mightier and stable person. The wind-god at once names the mountain-god as the more powerful presence as he can stop any forceful wind from passing through him. The mountain-god is invoked in turn but the clear-headed daughter denies even this offer. He is too stern and stony for me father, pleads the daughter. She would prefer even a small but more amiable figure than the mighty grooms, concludes the daughter. The hopeless sage asks the mountain-god to name someone who can surpass the might of the mountain. The mountain-god proclaims right away that rats are the only creatures that have the might to hole a mountain and pass through it. The sage finally invokes a mouse and the daughter is excited to see a being with whom she could bond. She agrees to the match instantly and the sage graciously turns back the young woman into a female mouse and approves the alliance.

This fable about the sage and mouse is a most popular *Panchatantra* tale and it gets circulated in different versions. The extant Sanskrit version, it must be pointed out, is richer than many other versions of the fable available in translation. However, it must be noted that all the versions contain the crucial elements of the composition which in fact appear to lend the fable to a certain determinist ("fatalistic") reading of it. It should be possible to *re-orient* the resources of the fable to show an alternative reading of the fable. This is the burden of the response that follows.

One strong and sedimented reading which the fable seems to confirm in every way can be called a "fatalist" or "essentialist" reading. When we observe the details of the fable carefully we notice that the details appear to confirm the "fact" that every entity or being—whether it is organic (life forms such as animal, human, bird) or inorganic (elements such as wind, cloud, mountain and air) is constituted by or endowed with a singular, distinctive essence that differentiates it from all other entities or beings in our habitat. No one can hope to meddle with it or manipulate it to turn it against its "given" essence. We, however, notice that the sage has done precisely this in turning the mouse into a human baby and adapting the animal-girl as daughter. He violated the given essence. This response confirms the filiation between narrative and identity.

This conservative (in political sense) reading can be reinforced by the specific detail by which the sage invokes and identifies each of the elements. The sun-god is identified as the illuminator of the three worlds (*tri lokya dipih*); the distinguishing mark is the brightness of the light. In turn, the daughter brings to light the other but corroborative aspect of the same identity in order to reject the groom.

The daughter reminds the sage that this light-giver of the world is burning hot to live with (*ati dahanatmakoyam*). The sun-god suggests the name of the cloud-god by specifying his essential power, and the daughter rejects this god too by pointing out that he is too dark and inert (*krishna varnoyam jadatma* -), like still water, and that his thunder is fearsome. Similarly, the cloud-god identifies the wind-god by specifying his mighty force that can blow away into pieces any cloud; and the daughter in turn confirms this essential quality of the force of the wind but designates it as fickle (*chanchalah*) and unstable.

The wind-god yields to the request of the sage and suggests the mountain-god as worthy power which can wall itself against any high wind. No wind can surpass the might of the mountain. Surely, the daughter confirms the essential traits of the mountain and its power—but rejects by calling him a stern and static object (*kathinatmakoyam stabdascha*). Finally, the mountain king confesses that the mice alone have the capability to make holes in the mountain that his (mountain's) body is holed everywhere by them. The mice are identified here not with what they are "endowed" with, but like the other elements in the series with what they are capable of doing, their activity. The moment the daughter sees the mouse she declares her choice (although now in human *form*) right away with that specific epistemic signifier that the Sanskrit reflective tradition reserves for singular, essential quality with which objects are differentiated and identified: *jati*. The daughter is exhilarated by seeing a *svajati,* Being of the *same* specific (species) identity. The mouse-daughter also declares that she would live, as in the case of the human species, her life in conformity with the endowment (dharma) that is specific to the *jati* of the mice.

In fact, the Sanskrit version of the fable begins with a long disputation (riddled with 8 non-narrative verses and one story) between the sage and the falcon concerning *jati*-specific endowment (dharma.) The sage, contends the falcon, violated the dharma that is specific to the falcon by throwing a stone at the bird to get the mouse released from its talons. It must be noted that the larger nested frame within which this fable is recounted itself contests the claims about changing the singularity of species-difference.

Let's, in passing, recall that in the frame story regarding the battle between Crows and Owls, the losing Crows trick to infiltrate one of their crafty ministers into the enemy Owl's bastions. The Crow, feigning innocence, pleads with the powerful Owl king that his (the Crow's) wish was to be reborn as an owl so that he could serve the mighty king. It is in this context, deeply suspecting the craftiness of the crow that one of the shrewd ministers of the owls tries to reason with his king that instead of providing shelter and hospitality to him he should abandon the crafty crow. The Owl minister recounts several fables (18 narratives interrupted by about 263 non-narrative verses) to dissuade the king and other ministers from believing that the crow can become an owl, that the singularity of (*jati*) difference can be eliminated.

5.6 Contingencies

The frame story eloquently demonstrates the disastrous consequences of the desire to erase differences and the dangers of converting *hospitality* into an assimilation mission—of turning the other into the same. It must also be pointed out here without elaboration, that the epistemic relation between the singularity of *jati* and the differential endowments (dharma) related to it, and the cultivated indifference to any transcendental universal normative authority in Sanskrit reflective tradition (which sets it apart from the hegemonic monotheistic intellectual-cultural traditions) is the most worthy project for exploration, but it would take us beyond the scope of the task undertaken here. But does the "conservative", "deterministic", "essentialist" or even "reactionary" reading to which the fable *seems* to lend itself exhaust the potential for any other reading of this fibular composition? Does the identitarian thesis eliminate the figural and performative pulls of such a dexterously nested compositional weave? We need to look closely at the very detail which appears to lend itself to a conservative reading.

It is certainly true that each of the organic and non-organic entities or beings is invoked in the text with the singularity or the trait that distinguishes it from all other entities. But nested within this intricate narrative structure, apparently consolidating an essentializing identity is yet another counter-narrative that undermines the certainty of the earlier ("fatalistic") reading. When we attend closely to each of the *essential* traits of these elements—the sun-god's illumination and the intense heat, the cloud's density, darkness and inertia, the air's force and fickleness, the mountain-king's staying power, sternness and immobile might—we can also notice that this very detail is actually in service not just of an identitarian structure but something that counters it.

The detail that the fable provides actually seems to affirm not the certainty but the contingency of identity. On closer scrutiny we notice that the identity or singularity of the sun is certain as long as there is no cloud in the sky. Once the cloud appears on the scene the sun's identity is literally covered up. This is precisely what the sun-god says when he offers the name of the cloud-god as a worthy alternative to him:

> *"mamapyadhiko megho*
> *yenachachaditasya menamapi na jnayate" iti*
>
> (*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 2, p. 87)

> (Megha is superior to me. Once he covers me no one can even know my name, declares the sun-god.)

In other words, the singularity of name and identity of the sun-god will remain intact only on the condition of the *absence* of the cloud. Same is the case with all the other elements. The force of wind dispels and disperses the unique trait of dense darkness that secures the cloud his identity. The wind-god is superior to me; once he smites me I am blown into a thousand smithereens, confesses the cloud:

mattopyadhikosti vayuh.
Vayunahatoham sahasradhayami

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 2, p. 87)

(The power of wind ceases to protect the identity of the wind once the mountain confronts the wind):

mattopyadhikosti parvato yena samstabhya balavanapyaham dhriye

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 2, p. 88)

(Mountain is superior to me. Although I am a mighty figure but when he stops me I remain immobile, acknowledges the wind-god.)

Eventually, even the mountain-king's seemingly invincible power and distinction get undermined by the growing force of mice:

matyopadhika mushikah.
Ye maddeham sarvato bhedayanti

(*Panchatantram* 2009, vol. 2, p. 88)

(The impenetrably dense and hard rock—properties that mark this entity's distinction—are penetrated and perforated by the mice.)

This seemingly transparent fable appears to be constituted by a double logic of contingency. The certainty and truth of identity can be maintained only through repression or disavowal of the contingent conditions. The essential identity of the same can be maintained continuously as a grand sovereign accomplishment only by repressing or discarding the contingent and constitutive other. It must be, however, noted that the logic of contingency does not deny or disavow the question of the singularity of identity, the uniqueness of *jati*. It only reiterates the conditioned emergence of the truth of identity. In other words, the elemental (organic and inorganic) beings surely gain their unique distinction on the basis of the traits specific to them, that these traits are surely part of the entities in question here. Yet, the contingent factors (the cloud for the sun, the wind for the mountain) too gain their distinction precisely by *interrupting* the certainty of the sovereign truth of identity of any of Being.

5.7 Erasures

As can be seen we are only working with the resources that the text provides. The mnemotext here allows us to re-use the resources to unravel the sedimented structure that gains its certainty and continuity on the basis of excluding and disavowing or ignoring the constitutive conditions that enable a structure to proclaim its existence and distinction. The question, which of the logics (certainty or contingency) is correct cannot be answered exclusively; or, it can be answered only by retaining the violent hierarchy (certainty of identity as superior to contingency). The question can be affirmatively answered not through a binary logic of exclusion or inclusion but through an-other logic of contingency *and* certainty, or absence *and* presence—a logic that assures no certainty or guarantee of sovereign truth of any structure exclusively and permanently.

The *Panchatantra* fable has another critical cipher in it which would open yet another dimension to this nested narrative complex. This cipher concerns the choice of a gendered entity in this drama of identitarian certainties. What do we do with the two critical moments that the fable focuses on in knitting the double weave of the narrative? Let us recall that the two moments are (i) the specification of the gender of the mouse at the beginning and (ii) the moment of marriage. (Once again, it must be pointed out that the extant Sanskrit version offers some poignant account of parental responsibility concerning the young women who comes of age; and this account rendered in content-less verses in a specific context, can move beyond the context; the non-narrative verses have a generalizable efficacy.) What have women to do with the question of singular identities and their certainties?

The fable seems to provide an answer to this question not through a statement but in performance. Let us note that the excited young woman who consents to marriage with the *svajati* (species-specific) being promises to the sage that she would, following the conventions of the specific *jati*, render properly all the householder codes pertinent to the *jati*: (*svajativihitam gruhadharmam anutishtami*); I shall render the house-hold dharma as per the codes specific to my species, she vouches. Only then, the narrative goes on to the add, the sage—designated in the fable as the one discerning and learned in adjudicating women's dharma (*stri dharma vichakshanena*), (as if honouring the choice of the young woman and restituting her sovereignty to her)—uses his miraculous powers to restore her to the rightful species to which she belongs. The species being and its rightful existence are affirmed.

Two very critical factors reinforce the centrality of the gendered figure in the fibular account of singular/unique species identity: (i) No species sustenance and continuity is possible without the participation of differently gendered biological beings. (ii) But more importantly, within the horizon of the anthropos, consolidation and continuity of every patronymic nomenclature requires the transfer and transformation or translation of the woman figure from her natal abode to another paternal habitat. In other words, it is precisely this displacement, this discontinuous movement of woman from one house to another that conditions the possibility of the continuity and certainty of the singular patronymic, the name of the father of the clan. The fact that the sage Shalankayana is a childless figure who can no longer contribute to the continuity of his patronymic adds to the complexity of this narrative of inheritance. It is the movement or circulation of women alone across clan/families ensures the perpetuation of the name of the father. This is precisely what is implicitly affirmed in the young woman's assertion that she would abide by the householder codes specific to her species.

The *Panchatantra* fable exemplifies this congenital bonding between woman and the gendered inheritances of man. The performative of distinctive singularities cannot be rendered without the differentiated woman figure. As the identitarian structure gets affirmed in the readings of the fable (as conservative and reactionary) it opens up the possibilities of undermining that very dominant structure. Our response here has made an attempt to attend to tension between the logic of

certainty and the logic of contingency. The double structure of the composition also brings to the fore a significant aspect of action knowledge here.

Despite his generosity and interest, the sage can neither master nor command the workings of dharma, the endowments of phenomenal forms (whether organic or inorganic). He is made to realize limits of his “powers”. Similarly, despite an individuated being’s action in existential situations, one’s actions are also overdetermined by immemorial endowments that compose the individuated being. The female figure is more inclined to cultivate her endowment than either be coerced or allured by the promise of the mighty and powerful. Here, dharma—the cultivable endowment—cannot be commanded by force or power. In short, ipseity and dharma cannot be made harmonious or continuous. But when one *forces* dharma to yield interested gratification, one cannot escape the consequences.

If the *Panchatantra*’s fractal compositional node intimates us with the effects of force and interest—the *Mahabharata* exposes us to a devastating experience resulting from a colossal failure to listen to the sense of dharma. If within a narrative node in the *Panchatantra* we notice the unmasterable intimations of existence, the compositional weave of the Tantras brackets any narrative identitarian consolidations emerging from the composition. The *Mahabharata* amplifies these intimations in its gigantic labyrinth of instantiated existences exposed to intricate situations of action knowledge. We shall turn to this demanding work of mnemocultures soon.

At one level this work, exploring the relation between reflective and generative forces in the articulations of the materiality of memory, body and idiom, can be seen as a primal inquiry—in the context of Indic cultural formations—regarding the relation between the body and symbolization. Cultures of memory in the Indic context, I contend, are more inclined towards embodied and enacted modes of verbal and visual symbolization. Hence their indifference towards writing and the archive as symbols of abstraction and representation in the cultural forms at an epistemic level. The very activity of symbolization is explored here in response to Derrida’s fundamental displacement of the most sedimented metaphysical relation between speech and writing. Yet, in consonance with the Western heritage which he was countersigning, Derrida continued to work, as I contended earlier, with the privileged emblems of this heritage—writing and the archive. Exploring his radical reflective initiatives, this work engages with the primordial communicational modes of speech and gesture and examines how cultural singularities and embodied signatures of memory get articulated.

Taking up one specific node of the mnemocultural ensemble, this chapter has examined the consequences of lithic prosthetic turn in the predominantly alithic cultural formations. While attending to the narrative turn, this chapter focused on the absence of the narrative imperative on the one hand and explored the implications of the persistent weave of the non-narrative in Sanskrit compositions. If literary inquiries remain reticent about the ethical categories in their spread, the narratives in Sanskrit reflective creative traditions suspend any consummation of identities. Mnemocultures evince a different relation between symbolic forms and embodied existences. How do these cultural formations respond to the iconic turn?

The cultivated indifference towards writing and archive in mnemocultural traditions implies a significantly different concern towards the symbol in general. Mnemocultural symbolization, unlike in the Western episteme, takes the radical step of suspending or reducing symbolization (verbal or visual) in general. The next chapter is devoted to explore this enigmatic relation to the symbol in Indic mnemocultural practices. The specific thematic undertaken here is the conspicuous absence of plastic images for nearly two millennia in Sanskrit reflective traditions.

Although the verbal compositions are replete with visual imagery and enacted rituals with clear status as spectacles in space—neither does the Sanskrit tradition offer any material artefacts and non-verbal visual imagery, nor does one find any injunction against idol/image making in these traditions. A similar tendency can be noticed among several communities of *jati*s and tribes of India. Neither an idol nor a temple captures a whole range of gods and goddesses of these communities (nor is there a single unifying narrative across these heterogeneous *jati*s).

It is contended here that the absence of plastic visual compositions has not received any attention of art theory in the Indian context. Art history, the only dominant discipline with regard to Indian "art" traditions, remained busy with archaeological and stylistic (and of late "political") questions. Indeed there is no rigorous account of the absence of any concept of art in the Sanskrit reflective traditions in the early period. The glib translation of the Sanskrit term *kala* as "art"—it will be argued—is not only epistemically untenable but it silently incurs translational and conceptual violence on Indic reflective practices. For, the concept of art is quintessentially Christian and it is on this concept that the entire "art" historical work in India floats. We shall explore the implications of these cultural differences in the next chapter on the visual traditions of Indian past.

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Chapter 6
Tanunapat: Kalos, Philos and the Vestiges of Trace

Abstract Along with staggered literacy and narrative turns, mnemocultures of India demonstrate a belated iconic turn. While probing into the aniconic and iconic elements that pervade Indian visual culture, this chapter focuses on the cultivated indifference of Sanskrit reflective traditions toward the plastic arts. Drawing on Sanskrit resources (such as *Chitrasutra* and *Shilpaprakasha*) this chapter analyses the relations between symbol, icon, desire, and the body, in order to show the epistemic contrasts between the European and the Indian reflective traditions.

Keywords Iconic and Aniconic · Art · Jean-Luc Nancy · Desire · Body · Para

> A trait never appears, never itself, because it marks the difference between the forms or the contents of appearing. A trait never appears, never itself, never for a first time. It begins by retrac(t)ing.
>
> Derrida (1987, p. 11).

In exploring the interface between the alithic and lithic formations the Chap. 5 grappled with the epistemic status of the narrative turn in mnemocultural formations. While tracking the consequences of the lithic turn, here we will examine the

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Given the foreignness of the title, a bit of glossing isn't out of place here. The Sanskrit term *tanunapat* connotes "of the body"—*tanu* (in Sanskrit) refers to the body. It has a whole range of other meanings as well: it alludes to some Vedic gods, their "political" pact, a sacrificial ritual bonding the sacrificer and the "reciter" at the ritual (Malamoud 1996a). The Greek term *kalos* is used here mainly in the sense of an "aesthetic" category—something that refers to or deals with beauty. I have drawn from two sources here: Loraux (2006, p. 18) and Derrida, who in his *Rogues* (2005, pp. 26–27), refers to Plato's discussion of democracy where Plato represents democracy as the "most beautiful (*kalliste*) constitution"—with variegated colours and multiple paradigms—attractive to women and children. The Greek term *philos* is used here not in its usual sense of love or filiality, but in its Homeric sense where it refers to "parts of the body or objects intimately related to the body" (Malamoud 1996a, p. 190).

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implications of protracted absence of lithic iconism and the institutionalized conception of "art" in the context of Sanskrit reflective traditions.

This chapter probes into the aniconic and iconic pulls that pervade Indian visual cultures. In examining the role of the icon, image and symbol, this chapter points to the poverty of discussion regarding the implications of aniconic impulse that structures the cultivated indifference of Indian (Sanskrit, tribal and other *jati*-reflective) traditions for nearly two millennia toward the plastic arts. Art historical inquiries over the last hundred years concentrated largely on the historical and formal aspects of temples, idols, styles and images. This chapter contends that art historical attempts function entirely in the conceptual-theoretical accounts of art institutionalized in the Western tradition. Drawing on Sanskrit reflective traditions an attempt is made here to theoretically grapple with the relation between symbol, icon, desire and the body. The chapter further explores the epistemic contrasts between European and Indian (mainly Sanskrit) reflective traditions and their implications for differential modes of being.

6.1 Re-Treating Art

In his general account of art as monstration without precedence, Jean-Luc Nancy states that the concept of art is quintessentially a Western and Christian concept.[1] Art as the sensible presentation of the Idea, "sensible visibility of the intelligible," making visible the invisible, continues to circulate everywhere, Nancy argues. Such conceptions of art have pervaded and determined not just philosophical but even non-philosophical accounts of art (art as communication of hidden truth or emotion), points out Nancy. "No other definition", he states, "escapes from this one sufficiently to oppose it in any fundamental way. It encloses, up until today the being or essence of art" (Nancy 1996, p. 88). Both idolatry and iconoclasm are haunted by this very onto-theological determination of art, Nancy concludes (1996, p. 99).

In a curiously historical account of the relation between art and theology Nancy claims that unlike Greek antiquity which monstrates, providing a vision of the gods, the "monologotheism" (Nancy's word) of Christianity indicates the absence, the withdrawal or the retreat of the divine. "Every portrait plays out in the

[1] There is a widely established consensus regarding this view in art historical and theoretical work. Thus, Paul Crowther in his rather polemical work (regarding the "recent preferences of Western culture"—concerning postcolonial thought, and feminism) on "normative aesthetics" writes: "It is true that the terms 'art' and the 'aesthetic' are Western concepts, but what they conceptualize is something of transhistorical and transcultural significance." As Husserl contended decades earlier, the only culture that can be particular and universal is the culture of Europe. Cf. Crowther (2007, p. 51).

In a similar vein, James Elkins writes: "Perhaps the most surprising fact about worldwide practices of art history is that there may be no conceptually independent national or regional traditions of art historical writing…I think it can be argued that there is no non-Western tradition of art history, if by that is meant a tradition with its own interpretive strategies and forms of argument" (Crowther 2007, p. 19, cf. also 3–24).

singular", claims Nancy (2006a, p. 240), "the impossible portrait of God, his retreat and his attraction". This is the double logic of deconstruction that practices the strategy of reading the same differently. But what is curious in Nancy's account here (somewhat discrepantly developed between the *The Muses* and *The Multiple Arts)* is that he should undersign this strategy in the name of the West as Christian. Further, in an oddly Hegelian gesture, Nancy identifies non-Christian polytheisms as still caught in pre-deconstructive ontotheology, or lacking in deconstructive "armature".

For Nancy, monologotheism lends itself to both an ontotheology and a self-deconstructive atheology of the subject. Every effort at subject-making, then, is an attempt either to repeat (and hope for a continuity of) the anterior presence or to dis-configure (and effect discontinuity of) the anterior absence. Hence, for Nancy, the history of "Western art has constantly been stretched by the (a)theology of an arche-artistic god" (Nancy 2006a, fn. 51, p. 268). This (a)theology constitutes the West's self-deconstruction: "the armature of every theory of the subject and the easel of all portraiture" (Nancy 2006a: fn. 49, p. 268).

In this identification of the West as monotheism, "polytheism" remains the epistemic casualty of the metaphysics of presence. If monologotheism inherently possesses the potential for atheological self-deconstruction, then polytheism remains devoid of any such impulse. Nancy suggests a markedly historicizing gesture between Plato and Plotinus; for between them, Nancy argues, "[W]e are on the verge of a transition between a divinity that moves toward presence and the one that flies from it" (Nancy 2006a, fn. 50, p. 268). This looks like the veritable journey of deconstructive teleology from polytheistic presence to Christianity's a-dieu; for, the teleology of absence seems to find its adequate representation in monotheistic Christianity. "The plurality of the gods", Nancy declares, "constitutes their visibility, whether potential or actual, as well as their presence. The art of polytheism provides a vision of the gods, while that of monotheism recalls the indivisibility of God withdrawn into His unity". Whence the edict against representational naivety in Judaeo-Islamic (Abrahamic) traditions (Nancy 2006a, pp. 240–241).

In this double logic with a monotheistic signature if Nancy began with the Christian concept of art as theological at one point, he seems to reach the other end with a monstration of the same as different:

> The art of the icon [in Christianity] is the art of a negative and apophantic theology. It is an art that denies representing what it presents. The icon exposes the invisible; not by rendering it properly visible but by exposing the presence of the invisible, calling thereby for a vision other than that of sight (Nancy 2006a, p. 241).

Nancy's account of art is of significant help in probing the trajectory of the problematic of art today.[2] But what is the purchase of such a theorization in the context of cultural formations which have no sublimated theological grounds—cultural practices, which for millennia proliferated a-graphically, a-lithically, un-architecturally and un-archivally? How does such a theorization fare in the living on of mnemocultural practices in the world today? Can these non-hegemonic formations, largely living with heteronormative and a-conceptual performative practices, communicate intimations concerning the act or activity of living itself? Is it still possible to be touched by these enigmatic acoustic allusions beyond the sedimented discourses of anthropology and history? The impulse of critical humanities takes the risk of affirming the touch of mnemocultures outside *in* the paradigmatic academy. Although Nancy (like Derrida) has little to do with mnemocultures, in our attempt to inquire into the iconic turn in the context which has been shaped by althic cultural formations, his formulations of art provide access to the theological grounds of art theory.

6.2 Aniconic Memories and Iconic Regulations

For the purpose of this chapter I wish to address what appear to be the most divisive contrapuntal pulls of aniconic and iconic practices of Indic (mainly Sanskrit) cultural formations. For this we shall return to a composition of primal significance in the context of the visual "arts" of India which we mentioned earlier: the *Chitrasutra* (Aphorisms of the Visual)—more specifically, the third *khanda* of the massive *Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapurana*.

The *Chitrasutra* offers a scene of learning in a *puranic* genre. The learner is the Yadava king, Vajra, grandson of Lord Krishna, who is said to have ruled Mathura after his father Aniruddha's death. The king sets out to learn from the sage Markandeya who is the great-grandson of Brahma. In this scene of learning Markandeya not only offers layered and intricate details concerning the most metaphysical issues (such as the repetitive origins of the universe, the enigmatic other called *para*–"Being"–and the modes of approaching it and the "ends of man", the purpose of drawing and image-making, but also even the most mundane material dealings [such as norms of buying and selling and the "rights" of the

[2] Nancy's argument can be stated in a simple formulation: Where there is theology there atheology emerges; or religion breeds secularity. Here, it must be pointed out that for over two decades Balagangadhara advanced the radical hypothesis that European descriptions of other cultures are deeply determined by Europe's cultural background and that this cultural background itself is brought forth by Christianity. Therefore, he contends, even to understand ourselves, we need to first grapple with the West's own self-understanding. Balagangadhara's general thesis (1994) is of immense significance in all attempts to reflect on India. Seen under the light of Balagangadhara's reading, Nancy's account here projects secularization of theological explanations. While moving with Balagangadhara's thesis, this work is an attempt to open another possible passageway to rethink Indian cultural formations.

buyer]). Vajra is an active and inquisitive mind. He places before Markandeya essential ontological questions concerning the relation between *para* and the senses, the multiplicity of forms and modes of bringing them forth. Among the eight parts of the third *khanda* (part) of the *purana*, the longest one is the *Chitrasutra,* with 117 chapters. The other parts of the *khanda* delineate and offer beneficial rituals, situationally relevant norms, duties of men and women, issues and exchanges in everyday life, worship and prayer chants, etc.

In the scene of learning that the *Chitrasutra* offers, the learned Markandeya explicates and elucidates the essence of *shastra* (*shastratattva*). What the sage provides here, as in the case of the mnemotexts discussed earlier, can only be described as an enumerative episteme. What gets enumerated is a series of functions, essences, characteristics (*guna/lakshana*), result (*phala*), appropriate places of operation, and defects or maladies (*dosha*) of the "arts" and rituals. Further, there are series within the series with enumerations linking, relaying discrete and diffracting series. Yet the proliferative series is inexhaustible and forever incomplete. What is at stake in such a series is the legitimacy of plastic figuration. For, what the plastic work aims to achieve is to grasp *para* (the *paramatma*) in its material form or perceptual apparatus. But *para* is absolutely inaccessible to or beyond the senses. King Vajra's fundamental question that triggers Markandeya's discourse on the art in general is precisely about this relation between *para*, universe (the domain composed and accessed by the complex of the *bhuta*s—the phenomenal-perceptual resources) and the arts:

> *Rupagandha rasairhina shabdah sparsha vivarjitaha*
> *Purushastu tvaya proktas tasyarupam idam katham*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 153)

> (How can one give form to the *para-purusha* who/which is said to be devoid of form, smell, taste, who/which is said to be free from sound and touch?)

This dialogue opens up the minutest issues concerning iconometry, material substances appropriate for different idols, modes of tending walls for sustaining the longevity of paintings, types of colours and ways of making them, and offers a veritable encyclopedic compendium about (embodied and externalized) material practices. As one of the earliest extensive reflective compositions on the figural and plastic "arts" in the Sanskrit tradition the *Chitrasutra*, however, assumes the double burden: (i) of enumerating and specifying the formal features of images and types and the nature of substances to be used and modes of their composition; and *Chitrasutra* accomplishes this task incomparably. (ii) More importantly, to reason imaginatively and justify image making in a culture that was profoundly indifferent to plastic and imagistic objects for nearly two millennia. The real burden of *Chitrasutra* is to account for the most belated iconic turn in a culture which has no injunction against graven images. Yet, as will be shown below, this "account" is not narrated in any temporal terms; it unfolds the enigmatic relation between the emergence and necessity of the phenomenal and the other which is beyond the

calculus of phenomenal-perceptual symbolization. Before we engage with the *Chitrasutra,* let's attend to some accounts about the lithic emergences.

As argued so far in this work, mnemocultures proliferate through reiterative processes of speech and gestural learning. Unlike the globally dominant representational-technological culture that reins through objectual, archival, prosthetic retentional systems and discursive power, subjugated or discarded mnemocultures insist on the inalienable destiny of the body complex, the being-form that one finds instantiated in one's coming forth. What does a lithic or iconic turn imply in such cultural formations? What does their pronounced absence in everyday practices suggest? Is there a pattern in mnemocultural indifference to lithic symbolization? To my knowledge, this set of questions has not attracted any critical theoretical engagement in the Indian (especially Sanskrit) context so far. As is well known, historical and formalist disciplinary productions have dominated Indic reflective practices concerning the iconic turn. Most of the historical accounts either work with a received conception of art or icon. Secondly, they all continue to function within the phonocentric bind. A phonocentric bind is that in which the graphical/figural is seen to derive from or represent the already existent phonic form. This cryptic contract between the phonic trait and the so-called graphic trait remains intact in historical inquiries.[3]

For Doris Meth Srinivasan, the renowned historian of the iconic turn in Indian history, who inquires into the "multiplicity convention" in Indian iconography, for instance, "Hindu" images are "theological statements," objects containing the presence of gods. The "sudden" emergence of such images and icons is explained in her work through recourse to a symptomatic phonocentric linearism:[4] these

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[3] Derrida's work insists on the need to unseal or decrypt this singular contract between the phonic and the graphic. Cf. (Derrida 1987, p. 10).

[4] Phonocentric linearism here refers to the most sedimented conception of language that serves as a paradigm of thought in the heritage of the West for over two millennia. As unravelled by Derrida, this paradigm "commonsensically" assumes the emergence of language as speech primordially. As discussed in an earlier chapter, this primordial medium is believed to have essential and uninterrupted access to the realm of mind or consciousness (Aristotle believed that the "symbols of speech" transmit the mental world.) Thus, speech (logos) operates as the primal and privileged source of access to the being of man. If speech is primal, then the commonly understood notion of writing gets the status of a derivative, secondary, subsequent, supplemental, existence. For writing merely transports speech (for Aristotle, the symbols of writing represent the symbols of speech). The relation between speech and writing thus becomes linear and thus implies a continuous (if derivative) and homogeneous logic of relation between these two media. Such a phono-logocentric logic has, argues Derrida, shaped structures of thought and practice in the history of the West. Derrida aligns this paradigm, as shown elaborately earlier, with theological reasoning—where the primal medium (logos/speech) and the preexistent essence (mind, consciousness, intelligence, god etc.) have a continuous, linear relationship. Basically such a conception plots the relation between the (metaphysical) world of the "spirit" and the (material) world of the sensible ("the body") in a hierarchical order where the latter has only a derivative status. Such theologically oriented linearization, Derrida argues, has suppressed the plurivocal and pluridimensional reflective modes in history.

Here my contention is that art historical work (in the Indian context at least) has barely begun to examine the consequences of "'four thousand years of linear writing'." It seems to me that,

visual forms are "concretizations of inquiries pursued in the Veda" (Srinivasan 1997, pp. 13–14). "A stable and mature iconography could be built from the outset", Srinivasan states, from the oral-formulaic compositions and the "common symbolic language" of the bards and storytellers. The "iconographic language" was stabilized by means of "oral models from literary recitations and performances" (Srinivasan 1997, pp. 315–316).

This linearity of transition from the "literary to artistic image" was already put in place by the theorist of Indian art, Ananda Coomaraswamy. Decades earlier, Coomaraswamy stated that the Vedic compositions had already developed "an iconography without icons" (quoted in Srinivasan 1997, p. 185). Along with this phonic linearism, a certain theologism was very much at work in the "theoretical" formulations of Coomaraswamy. With a "creationist" conviction, "redu[cing] Art to Theology", Coomaraswamy devoted himself to demonstrating the "complementarity" of Christian and Oriental art. This he did by translating Sanskrit figural language into Christian theological doctrine. "How is the form of the thing to be made evoked?" inquired Coomaraswamy. "This is the kernel of our doctrine," he declared, "and the answer can be made in a great many different ways. The art of God is the Son 'through whom all things are made'" (Coomaraswamy 1956, p. 41, 52, 34).

The universalization of Christian theology is firmly in place in Coomaraswamy's theorization of "Indian" art and iconography: "The 'words of God' are precisely those ideas and principles that can be expressed whether verbally or visually by art; the words or visual forms in which they are expressed are not merely sensible but also significant [that is, intelligible]" (Coomaraswamy 1956, p. 31). Art is simply a kind of "visual theology" for Coomaraswamy.[5] Examples of such linearist method and ontotheological content can be multiplied easily in the Indian context. "*Shilpa* is", to cite just one more such instance from a programmatic project on Indian traditions of "art", "essentially an *anukriti* of the 'divine'…" (Misra 2001, p. 216, "Shilpa").[6]

The historian's conceptual premise (theological) and method (linearism) amply reinforce Nancy's account of art sketched earlier. They simply reiterate the paradigmatic discursive accounts irrespective of the cultural singularities one is

(Footnote 4 continued)
despite its apparent "orality" (as was thought by Indologists) Sanskrit mnemocultures do not subscribe to the hierarchy of speech and gesture; secondly, they put to work the body rigorously and persistently in performance and recitation and evince indifference toward linearization of the embodied existence in archivable exterior forms. Conspicuously it is in the art historical work in the modern period that one notices the linearization of the relation between verbal compositions and plastic/visual forms. Cf. Derrida (1976, pp. 7–8, 85–87); the phrase quoted is a citation from the work of Andre Leroi-Gourhan and appears on p. 86 of Derrida's work.

[5] Some contemporary art critics, who, in their secularist zeal, attack Coomaraswamy for "spiritualizing" the past and developing a spiritualist national aesthetic during the colonial period, remain inattentive to the deeper complicity of their own "secular" "methods"—of (presupposing social, historical grounds) determining the "meaning" of "art" and "museum"—with Coomaraswamy's. Secondly, the latter kind of polemics is hardly in a position today to initiate a rethinking of the status of symbol and symbolization from non-European sources.

[6] *Anukrta* could mean, in the context, form that follows, or creation after, re-creation.

confronted with. Thus after conforming firmly to the theological conception that the "revelatory power" of the Vedic gods emerges in the iconic forms later, Doris Srinivasan goes on to enumerate and speculate on the conditions that led to the iconic representation of ritual figures. The questions that she pursues concern the positivity of the idol and icon and their emergence. Her main thesis is to explain how, why and when the iconic turn emerges and how the image represents the "structure of divinity".

Such inquiries do not grapple with the problem of the status of the material-symbol in such alithic, "pre-iconic" (aniconic) formations. Most of the work (whether "critical" or symptomatic) is regulated by the pulls of the positivity of the idol. In the process they are hardly alert to the possibility that their work simply conforms to Hegelian-Christian conceptions of art and that their work is in complicity with translational violence.[7]

6.3 Performative in Difference

What will have been the response of the "Vedic Brahmin" or the "subaltern tribal" to the extraordinary proliferation of the idols after the iconic turn of the tradition? Would the iconic turn have been felt as a disruption or rupture of the mnemocultural practices? Does the icon (like the other mnemotechnics) introduce, as is usually said, an epistemological break in the traditions? Would the Vedic Brahmin or the "tribal" have welcomed the iconoclastic rage of monotheisms?

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[7] By "translation violence" I mean annexing and appropriating or subsuming reflective and creative practices of one culture into the conceptual paradigms of another dominant culture and imposing the latter as the normative model for reading and interpreting the former.

Other accounts of Indian art by historians and "theorists" like Stella Kramrisch, and the collective work of the IGNCA (Kramrisch 1983/1994) only reconfirm in detail the determinations indicated here. These theoreticians enframe Indic plastic arts largely within the theological conception that Nancy discussed. Although Kramrisch's painstaking work is extensive and substantial, the position she espouses remains caught in the classical European conceptions of art. Writing about the tribal visual forms, Kramrisch, by default as it were, states that "the work of art [for the tribals] was an instrument of communication with the realm of the spirit, the other world … [a source for] identification with the superhuman reality … a means of communication between reality and those who are in need of sensing its presence" (p. 89, 120). Similarly, Srinivasan's massive compendium, *Mathura: The Cultural Heritage* (1989) is an impressive collection. This collection gathers different disciplinary perspectives about a significant phase *after* the iconic turn in Indic plastic arts. The perspectives in the collection, however, remain unrelated to each other, or to the theme (aniconic and iconic pulls) that we are exploring here. Another compendium that focuses on the iconographic, literary sources and different (unrelated) historical, empirical accounts of art practices in India is Williams (1981).

One can think of two[8] possible and related responses from the figure of the foreclosed, imaginary, "native informant"[9] in this context: (i) with the visible indifference toward all such iconophilic or lithic indulgences, one moves away from the spectacle; and, or (ii) a sort of "post-symbolic" suspension of the symbol itself. The latter response appears to be already at work in the status accorded to the epistemic terms of name and figure—*Nama* and *Rupa* in Sanskrit traditions. "As far as there are Form [*Rupa*] and Name [*Nama*], so far indeed, extends this [universe]", says an ancient source (Misra 2001, p. 81, "Rupa-Pratirupa").[10]

The "suspension" of the symbol, one can argue, comes *after* experiencing the epistemological potential of the symbol and symbolization. The symbol has its place; its ambivalent and differential relation to the body is grasped. This intimate grasp of and working with the symbol is experienced and effected in the mnemocultures through the forces of speech and gesture. What the symbol in general can accomplish—its referential and representational efficacy, its naming and formative potential—is internalized in these most immemorial sign forces of gesture and speech. Yet beyond or along with the referential/designating function of the symbol [*nama*], its allusive, cryptic, enigmatic, elliptical potential is most forcefully gathered (or dispersed) in composing the figural weaves of speech and gesture in mnemocultures. In this context, the term of the Sanskrit language—*shilpa*—provides the most crucial trace for differential articulation and classification of the symbol in these traditions.

The term *shilpa* in the sedimentated cultural amnesia today routinely refers to idol/material structure or form. But before the term was caught in the contrapuntal pulls of iconic and aniconic practices, *shilpa* in its Vedic mnemocultural compositions articulates the referential and figural functions of language on the one hand and also the embodied and performative competence in putting to work the dual potential of the symbol, on the other. Prominently *shilpa* in the Vedic corpus referred to the performative modes of dancing, music and singing; *shilpa* connoted the generative force as well as compositional recitational activity and dexterity in ritual performance (*Kaushitaki Brahmana* 1920, p. 522). In either function, *shilpa* is an embodied and enacted activity which is reiterated relentlessly. Performative repetition is the interminable sign-function of the body (Misra 2001, p. 203, "Shilpa"). The repetitive element of *shilpa* (whether in its speech or gestural form), however, can always subordinate the performative act to a machinic repetition—a repetition compulsion that forgets or ignores the relation between the body and the symbol. The term used for such repetitive compulsion in the traditions is *vrtti*. *Vrtti* is desire's abandoning of body to a machinic repetition (we will return to this theme).

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[8] These two (what might appear to be counter-intuitive) responses are of course in addition to the obvious reaction of falling in line, conforming to the newly dominant practice.

[9] For a powerful account of the foreclosed native informant's position, see Spivak (1999, Chap. 1, pp. 1–111).

[10] The distinctness of the formulation can't be ignored here. It does not suggest a preexisting universe/world as such; nor does it suggest that the word or act (*nama* or *rupa*) creates the universe. No teleological relation between the naming/forming activity and the universe can be assumed here.

At an apparent level, the iconic turn indicates a privileging of referential and gestural competence in figuring or shaping non-verbal material (in clay, wood, metal, rock and colour). The received way of grasping this turn is to emphasize continuities between the verbal and the visual-iconic domains through a linearist relation between them. In this received doxa the (non)referential performative status of the symbol in mnemocultural modes does not receive attention. Whether verbal or visual (material), the symbol has only an instrumental, representational, secondary status among the doxa. For, as was shown earlier, the material substance is simply assumed to communicate (transmit) the pre-existent content (presupposed in speech). Consequently, such a reading does not engage the question of the epistemic status implicitly accorded to the symbol in Sanskrit mnemocultural practices—as it resolves the question in conventional ways. This is a kind of paradigmatic or anamorphic[11] reading which lends itself to or conforms to the dominant conception of art that Nancy thematized. Let us turn to the *Chitrasutra* to examine the place of this paradigmatic linearism.

6.4 Ab-Original Series and Unprecedented Emergences

The entire composition of the *Chitrasutra* is made up of reflective responses. These demonstrate the intricacies of emergences, nuanced patterns of differential series. The proliferating series has no origin. The series of series is without any prior model. What is claimed to be prior to the differential series in the universe can neither be imagined as a differential system nor can "it" be accessed through such a system. What precedes has neither form nor sense.

Yet, enigmatically, that which is beyond or inaccessible to the senses, in order to manifest in and as the universe takes shape and comes into being of the senses; in other words, the inessential senses turn out to be the constitutive essences. This paradox cannot be reduced here. Another view of the same could be: the senses are quintessential but then the beyond of the senses cannot be reached through them. Yet the two—the senses and the beyond are essentially and contingently related. The senses are decisive but must be dispensed with. Secondly, the singularity (of *para*) that manifests in/as the universe comes forth in inexhaustible heterogeneity, as delirious simulacra—as repetitions with countless variations. What manifests comes into being as endless proliferation.

Thirdly and essentially what emerges or comes into being—despite the affirmation of *para*—does so in the absolute absence of a referent. The emergent is

[11] Preziosi (1989, p. 39), in his work on the "crisis" of art history, identifies anamorphism as "the channeling of vision into the singular point from which a scene reveals itself as veridical. Anamorphism is the basic design principle of the entire disciplinary apparatus, from panoptic instrumentality to the organization of art historical archive and constitutes one of the principal guiding metaphors linking together formats for analysis, theories of visual representation … and definitions to acceptable and proper formats of declamation."

without any referent. For the presence of *para*-Being is claimed to be beyond the referential or sensuous circuit. In this context the word *anukarana* in the sense of following precedence is ineffective in figuring the relation between the phenomenal and the non-phenomenal. The universe and its objects—the entire pattern believed to be amenable to the senses is without precedence. They are emergences without originals. The universe can only be absolutely non-representational. As such the universe cannot represent the presence of *para*—for the latter cannot be accessed through the "universal" (the sensual).

If the utterly heterogeneous universe is without a referent or cannot refer to a precedent, what are called the *kala*s, "arts", which are aligned to the senses, have a peculiar relation to the universe. The text calls it a relation of *anukarana.* As the emergences (without precedence) in the universe are inexhaustible or endless, so are the emergences of the arts; it is impossible to recount them without remainders. The modes and manner in which the arts "follow" the universe cannot be exhaustively represented. In the absence of a representable object/referent/essence, the universe circulates itself only in the form of its emergences. In the absence of any pre-existent object for comparison, the emergences in the universe proliferate as transforming or mutating series of entities. In the absence of a meta-referent—a referential pivot, the mode of dealing with proliferating emergences is through an enumerative episteme, which we discussed earlier.

Therefore the differential series of the universe is not a phenomenal replication of a suprasensible system of ideal forms of any Platonic type. There is neither an *eidos* nor *eidolon* here. Consequently, the relation between the phenomenal-sensual form and what is beyond it cannot be conceived in terms of oppositional pairs of real–ideal. Yet the text of *Chitrasutra* lends itself to such an oppositional logic as well. Thus the relation between the phenomenal and the beyond follows the division of *prakruti* ("original") versus *vikruti* (derivation-deviation).

Prakrutir vikrutistasya rupena paramatmanah
Alakshyam tasya tadrupam prakrutissa prakirtita
(*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 153)

(The inaccessible *para* manifests in two forms of *prakruti* and *vikruti*. But *vikruti*, the deformed or disfigured, will not find its ideal or proper form in *prakruti*.)

Prakruti is said to be invisible. The relation between the visible and invisible is therefore not of correspondence—but of incomparable diffraction. But it must be noted that they both—*prakruti* and *vikruti*—are co-originary. *Para* divides itself into the two simultaneously. They share the same origin, if there is any. The basis of this diffraction, the source of this de-forming, and the emergence of proliferating forms is said to be desire. Desire is the prime mover of all movements, formations and differentiations.

Ato bhagavatanena svechhaya tatpradarshitam
(*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 154)
(*Para* has desired to divide itself into heterogeneous forms.)

Desire divides and diffracts something from itself. The differential series of the universe does not follow any model. Phenomenal forms are the effect of the desire of and distance from, detachment with and difference from *para*. Further they cannot be reduced to or unified with *para* for the latter is beyond the phenomenal/sensible/intelligible matrix. Such is also the case with the "arts", when they emerge. The arts come forth, like the series in the universe, as interminably differentiated, intricately composed forms. They are non-duplicative, and non-representational; they are singular emergences. They are infinitely varying repetitions of what comes into being. The universe and the arts are thus analogically related; that is, they both are only variations of phenomenal formations, perceptual configurations.

Thus, for example, while explicating the forms of colour—five basic colours are first distinguished in the *Chitrasutra*. Then they are further separated from two types of mixed colours, which are in turn divided into 12 and 5 different mixed colours, respectively. Eventually, colour combinations could bring forth thousands of variegated colours, state the *sutra*s (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 79–81). Further these variations get limitlessly differentiated by means of the technique or practice of *kshayavrddhi* (literally, thickening-thinning of colour: more or less), the chiaroscuro of colour (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 126–133). If the arts of colour can be differentiated and distinguished thus, so could the arts of gesture and sculpture. All the arts could thus, like the diverse forms in the universe, be fractalized in their emergence. What is common to them is the endless series of variegated forms/shapes and colours. It is precisely in this sense that one could understand the *sutra*:

> *Chitre sadrushya karanam pradhanam parikirtitam*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 142)
>
> (In picture drawing, it is well-known, a similar view is important.)

Their relation (between the arts and the universe), if any, is one of contiguity and not genetic. Like the universe without precedence the arts too can only be so without any precedence. As the forms of being in the universe cannot be exhaustively enumerated—so is the case with the arts: their manifestations cannot be calculated without remainders.

> *Natyam hi vishwasya yatonukaram …*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 87)
>
> (As dance only follows the universe, it is indispensable to recount such following of the universe without remainders.)
>
> *Yatha nrutye tatha chitre trilokyanukrtih smrtah*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 117)
>
> (As in *nrutya* (dance) so in *chitra* (picture), the three worlds are followed.)

Here, *anukarana* is not capturing verisimilitude or what Rajasekhara terms on a similar occasion, *pratibimbatva* (mimetic reflection)—but in fact bringing forth heterogeneous forms—contiguous repetitive acts. The universe itself is an endless

fractilic repetition of mutating forms and shapes. The arts are only contiguously, metonymically related to the universe. There is no way in which these emergences (both in art and in the universe) can be exhaustively calculated. They proliferate ceaselessly. The dehiscence of the arts, like the forms in the universe, cannot be reduced either to the universe or *para*.

6.5 Phenomenal Difference

Para can thus divide and differ from itself in two (or multiple) "forms". The universe of the senses is not a derivative, it is a non-representational emergence. The universe is the effect of a differential principle and not a double of an ideal set of preexisting forms. The universe remains an absolutely incomparable emergence.

Similarly although the arts may bring forth heterogeneous forms amenable to the senses (referred to as *drushta*s or *sadrusha*s), but they cannot be reduced to only such representations.

> *Etadrupa samuddesha madrushtanam taveritam*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 142)
>
> (The arts, the *sutra* says, must bring forth the "absent" as well; it must figure what cannot be perceived.)

So far, says the sage to the king, you were acquainted with the invisible (those which are impossible to show in specific detail as they are, therefore to be pictured imaginatively) and their possible forms. The arts bring forth the visible and the invisible, he points out. They also comport stylized, synechdochic figurations of the visible (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 143). More than similarity, the arts in their bringing into existence of entities seem to underwrite a simulacral relation, a sort of parallel universe of forms. The arts figure or bring forth forms the way the universe does. The only difference, however, between the emergences of the universe and the arts is that the latter is a "delayed" and deferred but parallel and varied repetition of essentially the same activity.

But why does the universe emerge in the first place, and why does it exist?

The *Chitrasutra* initiates fundamental ontological questions such as: What is the work of man, his acts of responsibility? How can one hope to give form to *para* that is said to be beyond the access of the senses? How can one comprehend *para*? But the *Chitrasutra* can also appear to lend itself to resolve these interminable questions by offering a typical closure—that of naming and personifying *para* as a sectarian deity (Vishnu). The conflation of *para* (*Paramatma*) with the iconized purana figure of Vishnu is the path of resolution that the *Chitrasutra* can also be said to put forth. For this it seems to appropriate the non-sensible and form-less *para* into an identified figure of God. In the process the phenomenal world appears to be a compromise, the *Chitrasutra* suggests.

Since the non-sensible and formless *para* beyond the senses cannot be comprehended, or concentrated upon, the deified demiurge desires to manifest as

palpable form(s). The forms of the deity are then eminently amenable for ritual worship and spiritual concentration, for prayer and devotion. Without such access to the senses the "sense" of deity cannot be conceived. Further, the *shastra*s can study only the idol (*murti*) that has taken shape:

> *Avyakta hi gatir dukham dehabhruddhiravapyate*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 153)

> (The formless cannot be concentrated upon. Therefore only that which has taken form can be systematically discussed or studied.)

Form is the effect of a detour—it is the result of a diffraction of the non-sensible into the sensible. Only the effect of this detour is appropriable into the iconological. The closure and resolution of interminable questions can be accomplished thematically. The *Chitrasutra* thematizes this scene of learning. But nowhere in the *Chitrasutra* and even in the larger mnemotextual tradition, is the thematic confused or unified with *para* terminally. The puranas are the thematic appropriations or approximations of the aporetic relation between the invisible or the beyond of the senses and the sign senses. The distance and the difference between *para* and all the thematics of the sign and the sense are irreducible. The *Chitrasutra* constantly reminds one of this unequivocally.

The enumerative series, as discussed earlier, cannot exhaust the emergences and their mutations in the universe and in the arts. This is the aporia of the enumerative episteme. On the one hand it nurtures the desire to be exhaustive in fixing the patterns of the worldly and the sensible. But remainders escape the enumerated series interminably. Hence, the constant acknowledgement of incompleteness of the composition. Thus even after the elaborate classificatory/typological enumeration of the various arts (painting, woodwork, sculpture, dance, music etc.,), their distinct materiality (colour ingredients, quality and type of wood and stone, metal work, jewellery, etc.) and the general metaphysical objective of the arts, the sage Markandeya cautions the king: "Oh! King whatever has been imparted to you until now is only a rendering for the namesake; this was deliberate, for to elaborate all this is impossible even in several centuries" (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 150–151). Once again the impossibility of totalizing what emerges as new is noted here. The manifestations of art like the emergences of the universe are endless. They keep on emerging. That is the teaching of Markandeya: the inexhaustibility of the universe and the impossibility of knowing everything.

In the *Chitrasutra* the universe of the senses is an ineluctable necessity only in a precarious world—a world in which one cannot realize or grasp anything without the mediation of the senses—because the world is of the sense (in every sense—for *indriya*s include discerning faculties as well—*buddhi, manas*). But as *para* is beyond the senses—formless and untouchable and it must be meditated on only as formless or devoid of form from the inside of oneself:

> *Atmanah paramam dhama rupahinam vichintayet*
> (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 154–55)

(*Para* must be meditated on only as without form.)

The senses are of ineluctable necessity but they must be suspended in accessing or realizing *para* in existence. The *Chitrasutra* enumerates and specifies the maximal and the minimal most levels of range and reach of the senses in their extreme extensions to spread out and apprehend *para*. The senses, parallel, interweave, simulacrally repeat and are filiated to the elements of the universe whose access is through the domain of the senses.

The ensemble of the senses, in its dynamic exchange with the elements, is enumerated in a series of five categories. These five series, with their internal variations and division make up a hierarchy of the sense access. The hierarchy composed of singular elements (numbered 25 in the text), measures up to femto levels in suggesting sense access (*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, pp. 674–675). The *Chitrasutra* indicates a sub-particulate level—a level beyond the reach of the "normal" senses and names it the subtlest element/force/energy untouchable and inaccessible to the (gross) senses. The *Chitrasutra* specifies that this element of *para* could be suggested not only in fractal—sub-atomic instances but also among the most maximal imaginable forms:

Anoraniyan mahato mahiyanatma guhayam nihitosya jantoh
(*Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapuranamu* 1988, p. 676)

(*Para* is atomically smaller than atom and most gigantic than the gigantic. Such Beingness is placed in the grotto of *life form—"animal"*.)

That which, neither in the subtlety of its size nor in the magnitude of its shape is smaller or larger is the measure of the immeasurable *para*. As can be seen, the "sense" beyond the senses is both transcendent as it is exterior and prior to the emergence of the universe of the senses and it is also immanent as it is in its subtlest of the subtle "sense" located within the empirical self but beyond the access of the senses. The outside-exterior is also the inside-interior to the entities-beings of the universe. The outside is inside and the inside is a simulacrum of the outside. The hierarchy of the senses is stretched on a scale of the most maximal and the lowest minimal. The universe with gigantic forms filiated to the senses is composed of five elements (*pancha mahabhuta*s).

Whether immanent or transcendent, the "sense" of *para* is inaccessible to these senses and their regime. Yet, it must be stated here again, as mentioned earlier, that although *para* cannot be reduced to the material phenomenal senses, its existence or non-existence is entirely contingent upon the emergence of the phenomenal entities; for the entire reflection of *para* unfolds only in the context of the instantial emergences of the bodies (we shall return to this theme in Chap. 7). The experience of the senses is explored and acknowledged at the subtlest of levels and its discontinuity with the experience of the beyond is explicitly thematized in the *Chitrasutra*. Thus the iconic turn here configures no filial relationship to the theological; the phenomenal is not the representational derivative. The composition of the *Chitrasutra* elaborately dwells on the iconic but affirms the irreducible difference between the phenomenal and the non-phenomenal. Yet, such an

affirmation always gets expression from the very formations of the phenomenal—the visual or verbal symbolizations, the embodied existences.

6.6 Symbol, Body and the Mnemopraxial Life

But how does the symbol circulate in mnemocultures? What is the relation between the body and the symbol (verbal or visual) form? In mnemocultural conceptions, as we suggested earlier, the symbol is intimately affiliated to the body; it is enacted, embodied, performed, and re-cited. The symbol is always of/from the body. The Brahmin tradition, for instance, unfolds essentially and effectively through such mnemopraxial symbolization. Yet, in this tradition, however filiated the relation between the body and symbol might appear to be, the body is required to learn to suspend the symbol. But this suspension of symbol cannot be computed as the metaphysical gesture of suspending the body in deference to some transcendental entity as such. The body here is no visible unity modeled after or representing some invisible entity. The anthropos is just one in an n + 1 series of proliferating bodies.

In this series the body is never a unity circulating seamlessly. The body comes forth, and emerges as a constitutively divided complex. Although internally varied and minutely stratified, the body is not only an abode of multiple gods—but most crucially it carries within itself that which is absolutely irreducible to the body. The body's other that comes forth and lives on with/in the body and divides and differentiates "itself" into and from the body is called *para* in the Sanskrit traditions. *Para* simply marks the limits of the material and yet remains always embodied. The body's relation to *para* cannot be conceived in representational or linear terms. It is a simultaneously emergent and irreducibly differential trace; it co-belongs to the body.[12]

[12] A whole range of compositions of the Upanishads of the internally differentiated Vedic branches, from the *Bruhadaranyaka* to *Kena*, *Katha* and *Isavasya* reiterate this structure of the body complex. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, for example, in the section called Bhruguvalli, configures the body as composed of different but related sheaths (*koshas*) which provide passages to the *Anandamaya* sheath of *para*. Cf. *Taittiriya Upanishad* (1984, pp. 71–95). *Prashnopanishad* points to the various presiding deities (*adhistana devatas* such as the sky/firmament, wind, water, fire, earth) of the body complex who govern the perceptual and actional faculties. Cf. *Prashnopanishad* (1984, pp. 159–169). *Mundakopanishad* repeatedly refers to the heart as the abode of *para* and suggests the need to learn about its existence in the embodied life of the body itself. Cf. *Mundakopanishad* (1984, 1:2:10, pp. 207–208). But the Upanishads point out that *para* is pervasive and proximate and distant at the same time. The learned will realize it within the reflective cave of one's own body. Cf. *Mundakopanishad* (1984, 1:3:1:7: pp. 223–224). References to Upanishadic passages can be multiplied—and each of these reiterates differently this critical configuration of the body complex. The most significant learning that the Upanishads suggest is to practice a mode of being that lives this singular-plural structure without reducing one to the other.

Para is the figure of a certain kind of vigilant passivity, playing the witness-guest in the mnemopraxial host called the body. The body can neither assimilate (and thus efface), nor can it abandon and thus escape this an-agentive and non-substantial *para* that dwells in the most primordial material finitude called the body.

What this enigmatic relation of *para* and the body calls for is a mode of living on—that which (i) praxially maintains the division and difference between *para* and the body; (ii) that which warns against the body's forgetting of *para*'s difference. Everybody, not just the anthropic, is exposed to the interminable question of living on otherwise than with the unit or unity of one's "being". Every unit or unity constitutively and internally embodies the absolutely inassimilable *para*; if there is no other, then there is no being. No body, not even gods can escape this double bind of the *sharira-para*. The only epistemically cherished lesson one is invited to learn in this context is: *how to live on with this structure of the other-in-being*.

Yet, it must be added here that this question of "how" is of no great significance if it were to take only a discursive (*shastric*) orientation. Every discursive endeavour must be suspended before the responsibility of living on. Mnemopraxial responsibility cannot be measured by discursive protocols; they remain incommensurable. The body can respond to the call only by enacting, embodying and indeed in living on—only performatively. Here the body itself (with its dual structure) is the most singular-plural material entity of the performative effect. The body is the performing medium and the figure of espacement. The body bears the performative effects. Given that everybody is expected/required to put to work itself and reconfigure itself (an intimation of *para* as it were, for the phenomenal is the effect of *para*'s self difference), a reconfiguration which would bear the deferred effects of the irreducible material figural entity—the body itself—all the symbolic and discursive entities will only have derivative epistemic status in relation to the body.

Mnemopraxial traditions live on with the available. In their restless living on of the enigmatic body complex mnemocultures are not outside the processes of the symbolic. Yet these processes and modes do not reduce the absolute materiality of the body complex. Every act of symbolizations puts the body to work in all sorts of song, narrative, visual and performative domains. Yet, all these mnemocultural domains are intangible possessions, un-archival monuments of memory. In each rendering they reiterate the absolute necessity of putting the body to work. Only through such a praxial work can the generative force that brings forth the body complex can be responded to.

The emergence or coming forth of the body is itself an absolute and discrete instantiation of the repetitive work of memory and desire. As desire and memory abide by the law of repetition—incalculable repetition—the body circulates as the most resilient index of repetition. Every birth, therefore, every body, is also a discontinuous and varied repetition of transgenerational memories and desires texturing the biological and "acquired" rhythms of these reiterated emergences. This absolutely enigmatic reiterative structure of the body has remained the centre

of reflective concerns and practices of Indic (Sanskrit) traditions for millennia. In other words, it is this strange and abyssal force of repetition—whose effect the body is—that figures prominently in these reflective concerns.

The mnemocultural is the interminable articulation of memory, symbol and desire in the instantiation of the body. As the medium and effect of memory and desire, the body generates the symbol. As the generative effect the symbol too is the effect and medium of desire and memory. Yet, the symbol can function as a discrete supplement and autonomous entity with regard to the body. Consequently, the symbol can draw exclusive attention to itself and contribute to either forgetting of the body or instrumentalizing of the body. In all such endeavours the symbol is privileged to pursue either etiological inquiries into the memory (origin) and desire (intention) to unravel the operations of desire and memory. Such inquiries aggravate departures from mnemopraxial modes of being.

Every body instantiates a mode of being. Every body is an instantiation. In other words, what matters in mnemocultures is the radicality of instantiation—of the coming forth of the mode of the body complex. How to articulate the mode and the complex? Responses to such a question must be performed and not constated—the mode must be effected in being rather than in projecting an ought ("how should one live?"). Mnemopraxiality, as we discussed earlier, has no use for moral/ethical theorizing. Learning is essentially oriented to tending a mode of being—a tending that is incomparable. In other words, every existent, incomparable in its coming forth and living on, is exposed to and must learn to respond to the question of mode and of being. That is, *who/how* (one) lives the body complex? No amount of rendering accounts of *who/how* and no amount of constating can be brought forth as appropriate response to this interminable inquiry. Such inquiry, apparently dispersed in differential forms of being/living, must eventually grapple with the question (who/how [one] lives?) actually in being—in reflective praxis, in tending the mode and being. Mnemocultural reflective practice renders this inquiry in effective ways.

However powerful their supplemental force and substance might be, mnemocultures evince a kind of cultivated indifference toward the material/symbolic effects and discursive formations that seek a decisive departure from the body complex (the generative source) and draw attention exclusively towards themselves. Such lithic prosthetic formations have only reducible and secondary status with regard to the immense mnemopraxial responsibility of living on in the double bind of the dual *para-sharira* structure. Hence, the epistemic suspension or indifference to the symbol—despite its potential for indefinite and infinite proliferations.

Even when the symbol's potential is put to work—mostly through the embodied modes of speech (recitation and song) and gesture (ritual and dance)—mnemocultures respond to and draw more on the figural, elliptical and cryptic resources than its referential, representational functions. Speech and gesture (song/narration and performance) reiterate the body's constitutive and generative enactment in every instantiation. Therefore, the derivative work of objectifying or representing the body complex by means of the symbol does not attract epistemic privilege in

these traditions/practices. There is nothing that needs representation or exemplification—there is only living on of the body complex in its trans-formative reconfigurations of its singular-plural being-other. There is no almighty that can either escape or short-circuit this trajectory of living on with the other. Every god has to live on with this structure—differentially.

Although each body, every body, is caught in the double bind of *sharira-para*, one cannot assume that all the bodies are, then, homogeneous. The double bind is the constitutive impulse of the body—but how each body negotiates with the double bind and articulates its own trans-formations is indeterminable. Mnemopraxial responsibility is at work precisely in such indeterminable moments of negotiation. As there is no normative mode or negotiation, no paradigmatic model of living, the potential for heterogeneous bodies to generate singular responses is always an open possibility. One can suggest here that what might appear to be a kind of normative double bind that constitutes every body lends itself heterogeneously to a-normative negotiations with it. That is, although every body has to confront the binds that bring forth the life form, each one will have to learn to negotiate with the binds in the form in which one finds oneself. Mnemocultures affirm singularities of such negotiations.

A decisive testimony to mnemocultural singularities can be discerned in the radical diversity of idiomatic speech forms and gestural genres in the an-alphabetic, an-archival and an-architectural communities. The "aphoristic energy" (to repeat Derrida's idiom) of these idiomatic singularities cannot be reduced to or subsumed under some normative referential objectifications of referential discourses. The idioms/communities proliferate and disperse across generations– un-archivally and a-lithically as *jati*s on the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

6.7 Iconic Turns and Objectual Knowledges

What is being contended here is that the Sanskrit reflective traditions seem to evince a certain kind of cultivated indifference for nearly two millennia toward the plastic arts. This indifference seems to emerge from a certain implicit understanding of alithic and lithic symbolization on the one hand and the relation between the body and symbol on the other. Art historical inquiries over the last hundred years concentrated largely on the historical and formal aspects of temples, idols and images. But art historical attempts (emerging from colonial modernity) function entirely in the conceptual-theoretical accounts of art institutionalised in the Western tradition. Consequently there is barely any attempt grapple with this significant indifference to plastic figuration (and mnemotechniques in general) in ancient Indian traditions. Any attempt to address this question must pay scrupulous attention not only to the conspicuous absence but also to the significant emergence of idol making. The iconic turn, the visualization of figures in material forms, clearly drew attention in a tradition that for nearly two millennia (from the early second millennium BCE till about the beginning of the CE) remained indifferent to figural productions in

material substances. What is the status of the idol/image in a tradition that has no injunction against the graven images? How does one understand this enigmatic absence and the intriguing emergence of the plastic figuration? As discussed earlier, the *Chitrasutra* (along with the radical expansion of temple architecture) eloquently demonstrates the iconic turn in Indian cultural practices.

What are, then, the implications of the iconic turn in the mnemocultural traditions? Does it mark a rupture in the epistemic formation? Here, one must initiate another kind of question as well: Does the material substance of the symbol (whether phonic or graphic, lithic or metallic, clay or cotton, leather or glass, ivory or wood) really transform the epistemological status of the symbol? Is thinking/reflection reducible to the material contexts from which it bodies forth? Above all, is thought identical with the material substance in which it happens to come forth? Does thought translate across the singularity of substances in which it takes shape or comes forth? Can thinking transcend the idiom of its formation?[13]

Whenever thought and material substance of its formation are too narrowly filiated, historical and formal modes of inquiry into the material substances, as originary sources of thought, seem to gain prominence. One can argue that the entire archival/archaeological turn of European thought derives from this filiation of thought to substance. The privileged story of writing (in the narrow, colloquial sense) is a powerful testimony to this line of inquiry. As is well known, for over four decades Derrida's writings, from *Of Grammatology* to *Archive Fever* and later, were a relentless undertaking that aimed at overturning and displacing this entrenched paradigm of thought.

Mnemocultures, drawing on the embodied (but differential) resources of speech and gesture of the body praxially (and non-discursively) address and performatively respond to another kind of question: how to articulate the body and symbol in the interminable contexts of living on? Mnemocultures respond to the question in

[13] Jacques Derrida's reflections on this kind of inquiry may point to different (but relatable) directions. In his earliest meditations on the logic of symbol-sign, substance-line and trace and all the other derivative forms and material emerging from such logic, Derrida wrote that "*thought* is here for me a perfectly neutral name, the blank part of the text, the necessarily indeterminate index of a future epoch of difference. *In a certain sense, 'thought' means nothing* … thinking is what we already know we have not yet begun" (Derrida 1976, p. 93, emphases in the original). From the same thinker, we get in another context the affirmation that "the essential link that passes from the thinking of the gift to language, or in any case to the trace, will never be able to avoid idioms…is it not impossible to isolate a concept of the essence of the gift that transcends idiomatic difference?" (Derrida 1982b, p. 54). But Derrida also has taught us to yearn for an infinite freedom that commits one to the "abstract possibility of the impossible translation" across the radical singularities of culture (Derrida 1996, p. 18). Derrida's work demands us to think/work in the aporia of idiom (irreducible singularity) and translation (transcendental reduction of the singular). Curiously, however, while discussing the critical thematic of survival and its relation to the idiom Derrida appears to opt for survival (better to survive than preserve the idiom: "an impossible counsel": "I do not know whether salvation for the other presupposes the salvation of the idiom.") Doesn't such a stance too quickly decide a way out of aporia? What are the consequences of such a decision in the context of the "tragic economy" of homogenizing globalization? (Cf. Derrida 1966, p. 30).

multidimensional radial idiomatic articulations of gesture and speech, through the visual and verbal accentuations of the body. They also, as in the context of the Vedic compositions, affirm an indifference to and (eventually) suspend the symbol in general.[14] For, what is implicit in mnemopraxial traditions is that the singularity of the body can have no effective substitute; no symbol can be rigorously advanced as a proxy, image, and *eidos/eidolon* for the body. The trans-formations of the body must be performatively wrought—not archivally accumulated or archaeologically museumized (as a "new soteriology") (Derrida 1966, p. 30). In other words, there can be no appropriate or adequate substitute for embodying the work of thought/reflection than the most singular material substance and the figure of finitude: the body itself. And each body's difference from the other and its own double structure (the material body and the unassimilable *para*) disallow any unity or homogeneity of the body and thought: for no body's discursive exemplification (even if it indulges in such turns) escapes the epistemic erasure. Such embodied, non-discursive, and vigilantly passive reflection of the body is called *jnana* in the Sanskrit traditions.

In the dialogue between the learned king and the enlightened sage discussed above, the sage, in response to the king's question, states that in order to turn one's attention provisionally to *para*, one requires a form. Therefore, he says, only that which has taken form can be systematically discussed or studied (which the text *Chitrasutra* copiously elaborates). Yet in the ultimate reckoning, the sage goes on to say that *para* must be meditated on only without recourse to any form.

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[14] Vedic work points to two types of learning: *para* and *apara*—the learning *of* the other and that of the non-other. In the Indic mnemocultural practices, from what is received as the noblest composition (the Veda) to what is considered as the most ignoble act every singular symbolic form requires suspension as the *apara* (the non-other) form of finitudinal learning:

> *Dve vidye Veditavye…*
> *Para chaiva para cha*
> (Know that there are only two forms of learning: *para* and *apara).*

Every name and form, every *Nama* and *Rupa*, must be suspended or put under erasure, suggests the Sanskrit (Vedic) tradition. *Mundakopanishad*, 1.4. The next verse 1.5 of the Upanishad goes on to enumerate the apara *vidya*s (the learning that must be eventually discarded):

> *tatrapara Rgvedo Yajurvedaha*
> *Samavedodharvavedaha. shiksha kalpo*
> *Vyakaranam niruktam chando jyotishyamiti*

> (The *apara* learnings consist of all the four Vedas, and the disciplines associated with the Vedic learning); in contrast to these *apara* learnings, the Upanishad points out what the *para vidya* consists of:

> *Atha parayaya tadakshara madhigamyate*

(That which is *para* learning is something that emerges as one overcomes the *apara* learnings). (*Mundakopanishad* 2003, mantra 4: 43–49).

Both *nama* and *rupa*, naming and form-giving, which are privileged as the distinctive marks of being human (elsewhere), must be suspended. The internally differentiated body complex must be sustained and negotiated as an inquiry into the enigma of Being-*para*.

Departing from this common root of the reflective performative mode of living on, Greek antiquity (at least from Plato onwards) seems to have oriented itself toward the objectifying forms of knowledge-making. Once the Greek intellectual traditions inaugurated the epistemic turn, discursive, lithic, scribal, archival, architectural forms of consolidating the symbol were pursued systematically. This epistemic turn remained the most powerful regulative and productive force in European discursive productions. Knowledge-production is cherished as European distinction and affirmed as European difference from, say, the (alleged) Oriental pursuit of divinity (Vernant 1982, pp. 10–11, 2006, esp. "The Formation of Positivist Thought in Archaic Greece", pp. 371–398). No wonder, there are hardly any inquiries (in European accounts, other than historical) into the distinctive mode of relating to the symbol implicit in the *jnana* practices—especially inquiries that are interested in unraveling or resisting the paradigm of positive knowledges.

Consequently, what might be figured as the most originary of questions concerning the relation between the body and symbol remains un-addressed outside the paradigmatic episteme advanced in Greek-Jewish-Christian history. For the latter as the cultural referent institutionally governs thinking in general. Eventually, even if there were inquiries into the question—they are largely guided by the paradigmatic resolution—which is oriented toward objectifying positive knowledges. History and anthropology guided by philosophy-governed knowledge-production consolidated an epistemic culture that can convert every singular mnemoculture into an object of knowledge.[15] These normative disciplines were brought forth and served by the "six honest … hungry men", that Kipling wrote about.[16]

This is not to declare that mnemocultural signifying practices are completely devoid of any discursive potential. On the contrary, it can be affirmed that no patterned use of symbol can completely erase or cover-up its referential aspect.

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[15] It is precisely this kind of historical and objectual appropriation of the past that became the target of Nietzsche's fierce attack. (Cf. Nietzsche 1993, pp. 57–124).

[16] Kipling's *The Elephant Child* has the following lines:

> "I keep six honest serving-men
> (They taught me all I knew);
> Their names are What and Why and When
> And How and Where and Who.
> I send them over land and sea,
> I send them east and west;
> … For they are hungry men,
> But different folk have different views".
>
> Kipling, quoted by Muscarella (n.d.).

Naming is essential for making distinctions—and the act of naming cannot escape referential functions of language (whether speech or gesture). Yet, the myriad modes of naming (rapidly translating the singular into common and the general into specific) and the very modes or acts of naming (allusive, elliptical, cryptic, indirect, oblique, metonymic—in a word rhetorical/imaginative, poetic) and the utter fluidity and permeability of this otherwise paradigmatic and referential work (naming) undermine any unitary consolidation of naming activity into discursive-conceptual epistemes. Thus, centuries after the *Chitrasutra*, for instance, the composer of *Shilpaprakasha* (Bhattaraka 1966/2006) time and again repeats that his composition is only meant for his students and it is just an abridged form of the learning.

Shilpaprakasho granthoyam shishya bodhartham kevalam
Na jnanabheda jnanamcha samkshepat kinchiduchyate

(Bhattaraka 1966/2006, p. 376)

(This *Shilpaprakasha* composition is meant only for the instruction of disciples. No knowledge not even a part of knowledge can be conveyed in such an abridged form.)

(Bhattaraka 1966/2006, p. 377)

Centuries after Bhartruhari drawing on the same impulse of responsive reception of the past, Ramachandra Bhattaraka, the author of *Shilpaprakasha*, goes on to insist on the local differences which must be grasped:

Nana shastra matam shreshtham deshachare vibhinnata
Deshabhede tatha nyaye nanakare cha shikharaha

(Bhattaraka 1966/2006, pp. 378–379)

(In the understanding of the various excellent *shastra*s there are differences due to local customs; the temples, similarly are of various types, according to regions and canons.)

Laukikakarma margena pruthagritya sajayate

(Bhattaraka 1966/2006, pp. 378–379)

(Since there are different local traditions of architecture the styles also become different.)

Thus, even when mnemocultural speech and gestural acts name and demarcate elements and entities, the very modes of utterance and the diverse forms of address that disperse from mnemocultures require attention beyond historical and anthropological appropriations of them.

When *shastric* compositions proliferate in the Sanskrit traditions—compositions that explicate, comment, supplement, or condemn other compositions—what needs attention is the very modes and means of each of these compositions and their distinct generic ways of formulating their response to other compositions; whereas such compositions and performatives are often exposed to an anthropological gaze or an historicist quest in search of their presumed implicit (historical) truth value modern disciplinary accounts.[17] Thus compositions like the *Chitrasutra* of

[17] The recent clash of positions concerning the historical status of Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* (whether it is unified or stratified, with a single author or multiple authors) on the Indo-Eurasia website is a

Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapurana, or *Chitralakshana* or *Kavyaprakasha* are studied more as positive discourses about iconometry, iconography, historicality, and for practical value. Or, these compositions get exemplified as testimony to Indian (national) artistic and aesthetic traditions. These inquiries largely work with unexamined, presupposed or pre-comprehended conceptions of art—art as an imitational activity.

No wonder the multi-volume work of IGNCA[18]—avowedly devoted to retrieving theoretical and historical accounts of Indian aesthetic heritage—has little to offer on the very category that is retrieved from the Sanskrit lexicon to designate the indigenous concept of art—*kala*. Not only that there is no entry on the term (*kala*) in these volumes, but the conception of art that these volumes offer remains ill-thought or derivative. For none of these commentaries offers any sustained and rigorous inquiry into how these compositions, emerging even after the iconic turn, negotiate with the originary question of materializing symbol and its relation to the body; they have little to offer on the question of the enigmatic complex of the body as the most originary material entity to be put to work; such an inquiry remains to be initiated. In the absence of such a foundational inquiry, most of the prevalent inquiries appear to be programmed for bringing forth positivist knowledges.

6.8 Genos, Genres and the Generative Impulse

It may look paradoxical that the tradition which, in its central preoccupation with the body as the material-figure of finitude and its consequent indifference to or suspension of the symbol in general should lend itself to the generation of a whole range of heterogeneous mnemocultural compositions and multiple plastic and architectural forms for centuries. Each of these compositions—in its distinctly situated figuration of Name and Form (*nama* and *rupa* from the internally varied Vedic utterances to utterly divergent narrative, visual and performing forms)—affirms the singular and idiomatic articulations of the symbol. Each such affirmation is deeply filiated to or emerges as a mode of living on of a singular *genos/jana/jati*. It is indeed impossible to segregate these idiomatic compositions from the deeply marked singularities of proliferating communities.[19] The idiomatic

(Footnote 17 continued)
latest avatar of this quest. Cf., http://groups.yahoo.com/group/IndoEurasian_research/msearch?query=panini&pos=40&cnt=10 (as accessed in November 2011).

[18] The Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts is involved in bringing out resources and theories of Indian art traditions. The two series under which these retrievals are catalogued are: 1) *Kalamulashastra* and (2) *Kalatattvakosha.*

[19] However, it must be pointed out that European disciplinary formations in modernity aim at precisely such segregations. Such formations have decisive consequences when they are transplanted in non-European contexts. As one can see in folkloristics (even when practised by

divergences and differentiated *genos* that dispersed with them reiterate the singular modes of the living on of mnemocultural formations. Each mode and its demarcating idiom have distinct nomenclatures (*nama*) and genealogies (*sampradaya*) of lived life.

In their countless manifestations each of these idiomatic formations of the symbol (speech genres of hymns and song, narrative and aphorism, *shastra* and *sutra*, visual shapes in all sorts of substances, performing forms of distinctly marked bodies) reiterates the an-archival, an-architectural and an-alphabetic impulse of mnemocultures. Each of these symbolic singularities persistently articulates and accents the absolute centrality of the body and its work. The centrality of the body here must not be measured in terms of the content of these compositions of image, music, text—but in the very performativity of the body-symbol in each instance. Mnemocultures circulate and proliferate through performative reiterations and not by way of archival accumulations and representations.

Mnemocultural responsibility comes forth through these praxial performative acts and not in the form of any ethical systems of discourse. These a-normative acts of response and responsibility—in their symbolic singularities—are engendered by the axiomatic of tending the absolute material finitude called the body complex. There can be no normative system that can sublate the incalculable dispersive force of the heterogeneous symbolic and genetic singularities. There can be no normative system that can measure and predict axiomatic singularities of living on of the *genos*, of each body complex and its negotiation with the double bind of its formation. Such idiomatic singularities and axiomatic *sur-vivals* are moved only by transformative performative impulse. Every body is touched by this impulse. Each body's response to the touch silently configures the responsibility-effect in the working of that body, in its mode of *sur-vival*—the re-formations of the body.

The event of the iconic turn in the mnemocultural formations indicates the emergence of a differential idiom coming forth from demarcated *genos* implying a distinct mode of negotiating with the originaristic question of living on with the symbol. The Indic mnemocultural traditions lend themselves to the differentiating event and idiom but at the same time remain indifferent to the manifestations of the symbol in general (no wonder why hundreds of thousands of idols are annually made for specific festivals are literally liquidated ritually after the ceremonies). As there is no normative articulation of the idiom, as there is no unitary system of belief or mode of living on, the iconic turn is a singular event and at the same time a varied repetition of the singular symbolic. The iconic turn, like the other formations of the symbolic (of speech and gesture), would be discrete and could even be discontinuous but recursive persistently.

(Footnote 19 continued)
Indian academics), the "arts" are often separated from the "folk" that embody and render them. The structural addressee of these disciplinary formations is the Euro-American.

It might appear that the iconic turn, in its marked involvement in the object-making activity, its lithic and architectural indulgence, erupts as a radical rupture in the mnemocultural formations of India. Such a conception or contention can result only when one is inattentive to the workings of mnemocultural impulses. Such a conception assumes that cultures of speech and gesture lack the ability to deal with objects, material forms: in a word, they lack the object. On the contrary, one can argue in the vein pursued here, if there is any entity at all that perennially occupied mnemocultural reflectivity, it is the incomparably singular material, substantial form called the body.

The body is materiality par excellence. There can be, as argued earlier, no effective substitute for the body; in contrast to such tacitly reflective, passively vigilant workings with/of the body, the symbol in general remains a derivate metaphorical object. As the interminable performative of putting to work, the body complex can have no role-modeling substitute, mnemocultural practices in India cultivate indifference or suspend derivative objects—the prosthetics of desire for objectification. Whether speech or gesture, phonic or visual substance or material form or space—all the divergent forms of substance remain reducible as derivative substitutes for something that is impossible to substitute. Mnemopraxial responsibility operates in the working of this absolutely singular-plural body-complex.

In such a mnemopraxial reflective context, lithic, iconic, alphabetic, architectural and a plethora of other events can occur and may also find emplacement; and these events can also lend themselves to the formation of discursive knowledges. And yet—as singular, idiomatic symbolic entities all these events and manifestations have a reducible status. In the Indic mnemocultural practices, from what is received as the noblest composition (the Veda) to what is considered as the most ignoble act of skinning a carcass (the latter identified as an "art form"—*kala*), every singular symbolic form requires suspension as the *apara* (the non-other) form of learning.

The meditative utterances of *Mundakopanishad* reverberate once again:

Dve vidye Veditavye…
Parachaivaparacha

(*Mundakopanishad* 2003, pp. 43–49)

(Know that there are only two forms of learning: *para* and *apara*)

Every name and form, every *nama* and *rupa*, must be suspended or put under erasure. In this regard, even the compositions and treatises that idiomatically emerged during the iconic turn insist on the reduction of the icon for the ultimate purposes of reflecting on the double bind that constitutes the body. For the body is at once a complex of the material and immaterial, tangible and intangible, sensible and non-sensible forces. This complex, where the praxial mode of being is of ultimate or primary significance, can accommodate *and* suspend the symbol (be it verbal or visual). The icon, like any other symbolic form has only a reducible status in contrast to the irreducible singularity of the body complex. The only form of learning that is yearned for is the performative act of putting to work the body complex. There can be no alternative to such a performative.

Therefore, whenever and wherever the orientation shifts from the mnemopraxial responsibility toward valorization of the symbol, whether lithic or alithic, wherever and whenever the passive meditative engagement with the enigmatic *para-sharira* double bind is ignored or forgotten, whenever and wherever one's concern swerves from the slow rhythms of trans-forming (the) body complex—one condemns oneself to a relentless gyration of the body and the symbol. Such a circle of repetition is the effect and medium of desire,[20] which finds no termination in the circle (of birth and death).

6.9 Desire, Techné and the Multiple Arts

As mentioned earlier, *vrutti* is desire's abandoning of the body to a machinic repetition. Mnemopraxial responsibility requires one to be vigilant about such machinic living. Wherever one's desire blinds/binds the body to its double bind (formed by *para* inhabinting the machinic apparatus of the body) and fails to tend the desire non-coercively (without force), there *vrutti* dominates or takes over the body. Wherever and whenever *shilpa* is segregated from the connotations of situated and contextual monstration of dexterous compositional, ritualistic and performative competence—and reduced to repetitions, machinic display of skill, craft, it turns itself into the singular practices of artisanal *vrutti*s. These *vrutti*s, variously numbered and identified as sixty four (or even 512), indicate the a-normative proliferation of multiple practices—entirely associated with the derivative notions of the symbol as exteriorized material form. These forms—idiomatic in their emergence and circulation—as they are filiated to specific *genos* move on as the "multiple arts" of the *jati*s. A Sanskrit composition captures this point very well:

> *Pruthak pruthak kriyabhirhi kala bhedastu jayate*
> *Yaya kalam samashritya tannamna jatiruchyate*
>
> (Differentiations in the arts are born of differences in the action involved in them. Thus, *jati*s are known by the names depending on their support in the different arts.)
> (*Shukranitisara* 4:3:66, quoted by Misra 2001, p. 209, "Shilpa")

The determination of *shilpa* as *vrutti* is at the basis of the division and hierarchization of *shilpa* as force and craft—which, as pointed out earlier—manifested mainly as forms of speech and gesture. *Vrutti* is a determination of life as craft—a craft that invests in material objectification of *shilpa* as an artefact. In this reduction, *shilpa* as force and act without objectified remainders gains an exclusive determination as objectifiable act. *Vrutti* gains a general significance as an objectifying vocation. No wonder demarcation of communities (*genos/jatis and*

[20] The Vedic (Brahmana) god Prajapati is the perennially reiterated originary figure of this strange effect and channel of desire. He is re-originated in multiple acts of ritual and recitation, figuration and performance, reiterating the operations of desire as the form-giving impulse and the effect (Prajapati) as the desiring machine (cf. Malamoud 1996b, p. 215).

genres) continues under this nomenclature and its determined function. *Jati*s (*genos*) and *varna*s get demarcated, and named by their *vrutti*s.[21]

The practiced indifference to object making was probably an indifference to derivative activities. For, the *vyapti*/extension of the most singular material entity—the body—by means of material substitutes, "immortal" (non-perishable) symbolic objects will only have a seriously or profoundly trivial derivate position; and in a reflection which is immersed in grappling with the one and the only non-thing of exteriority—the body—such objects will have a secondary status. Such an inquiry will remain indifferent to non-perishable remainders. Nothing can be a worthy substitute or remainder to the singular-plural body itself.

Mnemocultures experientially sense the generative force of memory and desire as *of* and in the body. Mnemocultures sense the (im)possibility of terminating the generative impulse and effect. All such efforts reinforce the generative effect and bring forth forms that are the ineluctable result of memory and desire. Mnemocultures abandon the path of originary inquiries about the origins or operations of generative forces. For such inquiries remain insensitive to the irony of their operations—(which can only reconfirm the generative impulse—condemn one to repetition). Instead of indulging in such originaristic or unveiling exercises of generative forces through surrogate or supplementary forms mnemocultures tend/attend to these forces in their most radical instantiation—that of the body. In the process tacitly and in silence as it were, mnemocultures reckon the forces of memory and desire.

Mnemopraxial responsibility at a fundamental level involves tending—not repression of this re-originating force called desire in the silent trans-formation of the body complex. Mnemopraxial responsibility will remain asymptotically related to singularities of the symbol. *Jnana*—the mnemopraxial vigilant passivity, a mode of living on in the double bind of *sharira-para*—will forever remain incalculable beyond the calculus of formalization. Whereas the symbolic formations—lithic or alithic—tend to lend themselves to disciplinary formalizations.

But such calculations of knowledge production (largely in the frames of history and anthropology) however formidable their consolidations might be, as positive human sciences they will only reinforce a perverted relation with mnemopraxial formations. For as the driving force of the paradigm of positive science is objectification it will remain obsessively devoted to material and substantial representation of all sorts of practices through archivation, discursive formalization and institutional calculations (of "new soteriology"). The human sciences continue to be regulated by this urge. Indology (like other logos-centred domains such as Egyptology, Arabology, and Sinology), whose existence is based on formalizing "ancient India" into an object of description and analysis, archivation and appropriation, itself remains a part of the problem. Indology is yet to attend to the

[21] Interestingly, Manu, though aware of this determination of *vrutti*—does not accord any epistemic status to such demarcations. He preoccupies himself with only the 3 + 1 *jati*s. All the countless *jati*s that can be named, Manu suggests, are just the immeasurable permutations and combinations ("contaminations") of the basic 3 + 1 grid (*Manusmruti* 1928).

way the problem (of formalization and objectification) has been thematized in certain disciplines of the human sciences in recent years.

The recognition of the symbol as the substitute of/for the body and the need for the reduction of this double of the body—especially during the body's own immersion as a mnemopraxial act (*yajna*)—is routinely reiterated in the Vedic ritual performances. The symbolic substitutes—the only "iconic" figures in the Vedic period are made of earthen vessels and tufts of grass—are all eminently perishable material indeed. Both these material "images" of the sacrificer have to be destroyed and burnt during the ritual, thus affirming erasure of any imagistic/iconic vestige as an un-worthy substitute for the body (Malamoud 1996b, pp. 213–214).[22]

The extant scholarship which, approaching the question as it is wont to, forms from empirical retrieval methods, confirms the view that the Vedic cultural formation remained aniconic for nearly two millennia. In the entire Vedic corpus, despite its enormous agglomeration of the minutest details of worship, there is no mention of "the objects depicting the gods" (Malamoud 1996b, p. 208). "To date", wrote Srinivasan (1997, p. 189), "no Vedic images have been identified". This absence of sculpted or painted effigies and, indeed, the *absence* of any injunction against or accounts condemning the manufacture of images in the Vedic heritage—and the texts' "silence about the subject" cannot be explored via the kind of art

[22] It can be argued that the enigmatic relation in the mnemocultures between the symbol and the body sketched here manifests quite eloquently without being articulated thus in the conception and act of sacrifice in the Indic traditions. The emergence of the form (any form or form in general), the living on of/in/as the form, and the re-turn, re-emergence of the form are all embodied and enacted in/as sacrificial acts. In all such acts the body is both the medium and effect of the activity itself. There can be no substitute for such performative living on of the body and there can be no immortalization of such performativity in non-perishable material. No wonder rituals in the tradition require all the material used during the performance to be dispersed, disposed of, destroyed and erased. The body is required to reiterate itself without substitutes, without remainders for the body itself comes forth as the remainder or vestige. "The body of Man", wrote Malamoud (1996a, p. 97) "is the model for, and the origin of the sacrifice and is therefore both its departure point and its effect. But the sacrifice, for its part, in the guise of Speech, which is its final form—is what gives the body its ultimate substance". If the male body is the model for performative act (as it is also the model after the iconic turn in the conception of the foundational grid of the temple), this act gains its substance only when associated with Speech. Speech, as is well known in Indic traditions is always figured as the feminine (*vak*); speech and woman have the force of multiplicity in the textual compositions. Both these quintessential modes of mnemoculture—gesture and speech—are multiplied, a-normatively configured and enacted and reiterated persistently tacitly underwriting the co-constitutive emergence of genders, genres and *jati* or in a word *genos*.

Beyond the body, these mnemocultures invest in no remainders or vestiges. In this context I wish to point out that this chapter actually confines itself to what I take to be an unexplained issue (absence of the graphic symbolization) in the Sanskrit reflective traditions for over a millennium. This work does not refer to graphic symbolization per se or its historical evolution in South Asia region. Such a task, as it takes us into Paleolithic petrograms, petroglyphs and rock paintings of Bhimbetka to the plastic art and seals of the Indus Valley civilization, is beyond the scope and competence of this work.

historical inquiries that dominate the field today. What does this silence or indifference suggest about the symbolic trait in general in the Vedic mnemocultures?[23] This kind of question doesn't receive attention in the Indological scholarship. For Indological scholarship is essentially oriented toward archaeological-philological inquiries, inquiries which require evidentiary material out there. Therefore such inquiries remain delimited by the kind of evidence they gain access to or search for.

The question that we have been addressing is precisely: what does the absence of such evidentiary material indicate? This "silence" or indifference to the lithic-graphic, it must be pointed out, markedly distinguishes Indic mnemopraxiality from the theistic or even atheological (theism and atheism are actually twins of the same parentage) preoccupations narrativized by Nancy (1996, pp. 81–100, 2006b, pp. 220–241).[24] As argued earlier, all those entities (including gods) that lend themselves or come forth in tangible forms are destined to mortal or finite existence. This does not, however, mean that the tradition here valorizes some immortal and intangible entity as such. Mnemocultures, as they emerge and proliferate in heterogeneous ways, are not normed by any single common divine figure directly or indirectly; the non-representable other (*para*) is not out there at a distance in some ethereal region. As argued earlier, every material, physical entity comes forth with *para* (that inaccessible but proximate force) that cannot be accessed by the perceptual faculties but remains spread across and sheltered within the perceptual-cognitional web of the body. Neither theological (originary god originating and regulating) nor atheological (calculable human faculties attributed with sovereign agentive powers), mnemocultural work of the body is impelled to praxially reflect and experience alterity that inhabits the body. Such reflective-praxial mode of living distinguishes cultures of memory from other discourse-oriented cultures of knowledge.

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[23] Incidentally, writing about the tribal visual forms, Kramrisch points out that "If outside the pale of Hindu influences, and left to themselves, [tribal] people neither built temples nor did they make images of the gods." Kramrisch (1983/1994, p. 86). Here it must be pointed out that Kramrisch like most of the Indologists conflates Hindu with Sanskrit-Brahmin traditions. This is patently a 19th century catachrestic conflation. The fact that for almost two millennia there were neither temples nor images of gods in the Sanskrit traditions does not draw her attention to the aniconic impulse of these traditions. In this context, the "autobiographical" work, referred to earlier, from within the Sanskrit-Brahmin traditions that vigorously distinguish them from the so-called Hinduism, can be seen in Sarma (2007). Sarma graphically recounts the indifference of the surviving Brahmins of Vedic tradition towards temples.

[24] Monotheisms' edict against graven images or painted effigies seems very ironic in the context of mnemocultural relation to the symbol. In rejecting images/idols, but retaining the Word (logos-speech), monologotheism commits itself to representationalism and linearism of the phonè. No wonder, unlike in Nancy's narrative on monologotheism, Derrida's meditations invite us to unravel the sign in general (not just a regionalized signifier like the image/idol), and the linearist crypt between the phoné and graphé. The force of Derrida's work enables us to unravel positive sciences from within but without succumbing to the temptation to determine an alternative positive science. No wonder why grammatology cannot be advanced as a positive science.

Reflecting across the enormous grid of disciplinary sedimentations and evolved institutional structures and their regulated translational violence one broaches the *critical humanities* which can enable us to space oneself outside in the machinic grid that replicates itself through "us" (wherever we are). Touched by other intimations, one wonders whether the an-archival and the an-architectural impulse enable critical humanities to put to work the grid for an-architectonic figurations,[25] whether the orientation of the humanities as positive science can be put to work otherwise. Drawn into the an-original, immemorial mnemocultural resonance of gesture and speech, even as one is located outside in the ontopological grid of the humanities, one wonders whether critical humanities can enable us to reconfigure the "monument[s] of melody",[26] foreclosed by the ontotheological grid. Critical humanities remains open to future anterior intimations for forging another pact with gods—another relation with the body and symbol and it will enable us to reconfigure the force of *tanunapat.*

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[25] Here I am drawing on the very interesting observation made by Walter Henn in his monograph on Indian ("Hindu") temple. The grid (square 3 + 1) is the basis, writes Henn, for almost all Hindu temples. Each square was thought to be the abode of a deity. The square in the centre was the seat of Brahman. Yet, despite such apparently rigid base the grid did not constrain the forms that were developed on the grid structure, argues Henn (n.d.; 6): "Different motivations have led to totally different kinds of building. The only inference one can draw from this is that a grid as such is devoid of any architectonic value. It is only the meaningful content with which it is invested by the architect that determines the effect." How one negotiates with the dual structure, the double bind that brings forth one's "grid", one's body, that's precisely what matters. Mnemopraxial responsibility cannot be measured by anything else.

[26] The phrase is from Valery quoted by Derrida and Eisenmen (1997, p. 167) in his uneasy involvement in the architectural project with Peter Eisenman: "The central tension in this project, it seems to me, emerges from Eisenman's interested investment in building a monument of deconstruction (turning deconstruction into a construction) and his desire to derive a Jewish signature in deconstruction on the one hand" (Derrida and Eisenman 1997, pp. 7–13); and Derrida's own general orientation of deconstruction as an unravelling, inverting and displacing structures ("house") that one inhabits and his affirmation of an-architectural impulse at work in every philosopher, on the other ("in every philosopher there is an anti-architect, as well as a stillborn architect, an architect aborted…. I felt myself to be too much of a philosopher to assume any true architectural responsibility" (Derrida and Eisenman 1997, p. 166). "Thus architecture, and for similar reasons the law, are the ultimate tests of deconstruction" [p. 167]). That the figure of "house" is crucial in deconstructive unravelling is clear from Derrida's four decades old work, "The Ends of Man" (Derrida 1982a), where, outlining the "strategies" in dealing with the "system" that one inherits Derrida indicates the need to use "against the edifice the instruments or stones available in the house, that is, equally, in language" (Derrida 1982a, p. 135). No wonder in every critical positivizing moment of discussion in the project—moments where concretizing of deconstructive ideas into architectural form is discussed—Derrida takes refuge (through, of course, his own mediation—of "spacing") in Plato's Khora. Khora, Derrida repeatedly affirms, cannot be subsumed under the ontotheological structure of intelligible (Idea) opposed to the Sensible (material form). Khora espaces the structure without "itelf" turning into either. Khora is the unrepresentable that which receives/spaces all kinds of representations. The Khora is literally, as Derrida says, the foreigner—*para*—that impinges into Greek thought which cannot be measured by the paradigm and the grid that this heritage has developed (Derrida and Eisenman 1997).

The enigma of the body is the effect of an-originary forces of memory and desire. Given that the body is such an effect and any effort to indulge in etiological or other kinds of inquiry will not lead one out of the double bind. The body as the generative effect must be put to work in such a way that it emancipates itself from the relentless circularity of generation. Yet this mode of tending/attending to the generative forces cannot be represented as a task on the agenda. For all such agendas push one further into the circle. The tending of the body must be such that in this very instantiation of generative impulse—the body must learn to suspend the forces of memory and desire.

The generative impulse—like its effects—is of immemorial duration. In the play of life as instance and duration, what one does with the chance of one's existence configures one's mode of being and one's destiny. But, chance by definition is indeterminable, and one's chances may not yield a desired narrative consolidation of one's destiny. If mnemocultures reiterate mnemopraxial ethos, how does one figure out the addressee from their heterogeneous spread? The Chap. 7, while addressing the question of temporality and modes of being, inquires into the possible mnemocultural addressee. It is time to face the complex labyrinth that enables us to weave together the various elements of mnemocultures discussed so far. It is time to turn to the gigantic *Mahabharata*.

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Part III
Embodiments of Response

Chapter 7
The *Mahabharata* Contretemps: Temporality, Finitude and the Modes of Being in the *Itihasa*

Abstract This chapter explores the relation between compositional and existential modes of being in finite temporal instances of living in the world. This inquiry into time and being is undertaken in the context of the colossal *Mahabharata* composition. While tracking the implications of different compositional strands that weave the texts of the *Mahabharata*, this chapter searches for the implied addressee of this *itihasa*.

Keywords The Mahabharata · Contemporaneity · Non-narrative · Time and being · Addressee

> The more venturesome are those who say in a greater degree, in the manner of the singer. Their singing is turned away from all purposeful self-assertion. It is not a willing in the sense of desire. Their song does not solicit anything to be produced. In the song, the world's inner space concedes space within itself. The song of these singers is neither solicitation nor trade.
>
> Heidegger (1975, p. 138).

7.1 Risks of Contemporaneity

In our postcolonial disciplinary and institutional functioning, we are by default, as it were, demanded to reckon time, "our time", that is, the moment of our existence; we are required to deal with the present. There is an implicit anxiety about contemporaneity. Our academic context presumes us and our time to be contemporary. In this calculation our contemporaneity appears to emerge from our apparent synchrony with a chronometer and calendrical time. In this reckoning there appears to be a regulated approach to the past: *make the past present*. We are obligated to contemporanize an anterior chronotope—a model of time–space alliance

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articulated in the instantiation of a literary work or socio cultural signatures and events (Bender and Wellerby 1991, pp. 4–5).

Although the thematization of time implicit in this calculation can be seen to follow a linear, sequential, objective or mundane conception of time (Derrida 1976, pp. 66–67), it should be possible, from within the situation one finds oneself in, to address the question of temporality as instantiation of an existence. By temporality I mean the articulation of intractable duration and finite instance—an articulation which anticipates and affects a future. This chapter explores this relation between finite temporality and singularity of existence, time and being, in the polyvocal compositional weave of the *Mahabharata*.

But before we drift into the seductive coils and arresting sirens of the *Mahabharata* let's attend to the moment or instance of our departure (or arrival) termed contemporary. What is contemporaneity? Who is a contemporary? Is contemporaneity an assignment—as a natural terminus of our present physical existence in time? Or, is contemporaneity a mode of being that one strives for—a task which one does not see in isomorphic relation to one's exclusive present (chrono-calendric) existence? Can contemporaneity be heterogeneous to the unexamined privilege that one accords to the presentism of one's existence? Can contemporaneity be untimely, *anachronistic* and out of joint—*contretemps* with the now?

The contemporary is the *untimely*—warned Nietzsche in his radical critique of his times. Contemporariness in this sense is a singular relationship with one's own time disjunctively and anachronistically; one is at once proximate and also distanced from it; one is a "misfit" in the present. The contemporary is he, writes Agamben meditating on the question "who is contemporary?", "who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light but rather its darkness" (Agamben 2009, p. 44). In our case, the presentism of our academic institutional contemporaneity (to be with the latest) conceals the darkness of our postcolonial destitution.

The dazzle of our (colonial) modernity has blinded us to the darkness of our access to the resources of the past. Our contemporaneity has not enabled us to configure and affirm the resources of our pasts; we are yet to forge passages—beyond the anthropological and historical discourses—to our pasts that can open up different futures of the resources. We are yet to discern the singularity of difference that these resources enable us to forge. This is the measure of our postcolonial destitution.

Intellectual destitution is such a situation, where either we project someone else's concerns or are obligated by default as it were to answer questions forged elsewhere. In a word, we have lost access to our experience. We are yet to forge reflections from the resources of our pasts for thinking in general. As could be seen this work so far has made an effort to explore such resources in the mnemocultures of India. Let's now turn to the devastating composition of ancient India, the *Mahabharata*, in our effort to reconfigure Indian cultural difference as a task of contemporaneity.

7.2 Enframing Significance

The *Mahabharata* is a multi-narrative, multi-framed composition. There is no single narrative that runs straight from the beginning to the end. There are at least three major frames that a Telugu reader confronts: (i) The frame of Nannaya's Chalukyan court where the king, inspired by the composition heard in many tongues, many modes and from many people, tracing his own lineage to the Kurus, urges the poet to compose the *Mahabharata*[1] in Telugu (in the 11th century). The Chalukyan king hopes to configure his own existence by overcoming the temporal distance between the Kuru saga and his own. (ii) The sages in the forest committed to a fire ceremony which lasts for 12 years for the wellbeing of the world form another frame.[2] (iii) Then comes the frame of Janamejaya—already involved in a species-cleansing *yaga*. The *yaga* itself is a profound but vengeful response, after the disastrous war, in an instant of time; and this instance is interrupted to provide space for the remembrance of events and times past. The events and time recalled deeply impact the moment of existence at work.

Each of these three major frames undergoes interruption. For example at the beginning and end of the Ashwasa (chapter)—the Telugu poet recontextualizes his composition for the Chalukyan king and the celebrated court of poets. The sages interrupt the Suta's account by asking for elaboration (of the term *akshauhini*, Shamantapanchaka or about Kuru genealogy), etc. For the sages the composition is unprecedented (*apurva*); Janamejaya too has not heard it before—he is Vaisampayana's first human audience.[3] Thus, the varied frames draw the composition towards various contemporaneities and suggest the way it inflects and is inflected by the instants of its reception.

Nannaya's composition moves on improvisationaly—and it is not easy to see the logic of the improvisational nodes. The plurivocal *parva*s ("nodes", chapters) with heterogeneous material disrupt the synchronous narrative temporality of

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[1] As this work draws on the Indian *vangmaya* (the sonic-verbal universe which is composed of *kavya*s and *shastra*s), I shall be referring to the Telugu and Sanskrit versions of the *Mahabharata* here. (The bilingual Sanskrit-Telugu composition used here is referred to in the text as *Sriman Mahabharatam.*)

[2] Curiously, the setting of the sages is deeply enmeshed with the question of the instant; for Naimisha, the smallest unit in the reckoning of time—blink of an eye—already alludes to the immense possibilities in the instant—as the gods could eliminate demons in an instant; Naimisha does not just allude to a temporal possibility and anamnestically prefigure the catastrophic war but hints at the obstruction to the wheel of dharma; for it is in Naimisha that the wheel of dharma got broken. Cf. Pandeya (1964, pp. 405–408). Naimisha is both a blessed and accursed setting occurring in a temporal instant. It is in such a chronotope that the sages' inquiries and interventions invoke scenes of further violence and carnage, and destruction.

[3] Although, strictly speaking it is Vaisampayana and his other co-disciples (Devala, Suka, Sumanta) form the first human audience for the recitation of the *Mahabharata*. But this does not get emphasized and we have no clue to any rendering specific to the audiences of these other disciples.

Vyasa's three years[4] and the three centuries of the Telugu composers of the *Mahabharata*. The collection of episodic nodes defies any simple genealogical narrative. It appears to suggest another logic of reflection. Quite appropriate to the fractal structure of the instantial sets of life, the poetic-reflective mode can improvise lovingly and expand caringly or condense passingly and cite routinely any specific instance. Each of these elements may be rendered with elaboration or sparsity.

The composition repeats the multi-motif narrative elaboration in various ways. The entire composition of 100 *parva*s and 100,000 *shloka*s is captured synoptically in the Parvanukramani (sequence of *parva*s). It is repeated again briefly later. The repetition can refer not just to the story facets of the Pandava/Kauravas but to any other episode, event or motif of the composition. For example, in the section on genealogies scores of names of the ancestors from Manu to Pandavas are mentioned whereas others, which have only a filial significance in the genealogies, receive celebrated poetic space. While synoptically alluding to the actual patronymic figures of the clan (Kuru, Bharata, Puru), the *Mahabharata* lovingly improvises Yayati, Devayani, Shakuntala-Dushyanta's (amorous) lives and the sorrowful tale of Nala-Damayanti.[5]

Improvisation is a varied iteration of or putting to work what is available in the instant of existence. It can only unfold in an instant of temporal finite existence. Improvisation is of interminable duration. Instant and duration are co-constitutive—but irreducible, and non-oppositional iterations of temporality. Every instance of symbolic or biocultural existence is open to improvisation. The *Mahabharata* itself is an intricate node within the dispersed reflective-recitational compositions of Sanskrit *vangmaya* traditions. These internally differentiated traditions spread out over millennia as musical-metrical, reasoning imaginative improvisations of vocalic and gestural forms. The rhythms of improvisation while receiving the available (what the heritage bestows) render the received variedly and transform the received singularly.

As in the case with musical notes, every instance offers a challenge—the challenge of transforming the received, improvising the available. The finite instant is also a chance of/for response and a moment for making a difference. Such an improvisational mode—exposing oneself to finitudinal temporality—has no teleological destination. Improvisation unfolds temporally in and as a finite existence. Yet, this unfolding does not occur in terms of any staged evolution. Neither Yudhishtira nor Duryodhana is in any way a radically different being by

[4] Nannaya states that Vyasya took three years to compose his work: *samvatsara trayambu nirrminchi*—created over three years (*Kavitraya Virachita Srimadandhra Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, 1:1.67, p. 50). Henceforth, this composition is cited in the text as *Mahabharatamu*.

[5] In comparison with the glory of Yayati and Sakuntala, the nodes of Puru and Bharata pale away into a routine list. These celebrated nodes not only get extended *upakhyana* status, but they enjoy special reception in the Indian literary traditions. There is neither a Puropakhyana nor a Bharatopakhyana on a comparable scale. Such instances can be multiplied in the composition of the *Mahabharata* (such as Udanka, Astika, Dushyanta, Sauparna, Nala-Damayanti and others).

the "end". They cultivate and rigorously put to work what they assume to be their endowments—their impulses or intimations of existence. Improvisation is recursive praxis without end.[6] In a million voices the *Mahabharata* articulates the improvisational/praxial mode of being as the challenge of existence. For Ramanujan (1999, p. 169), in the *Mahabharata* "many waves of many amplitudes meet here—as in a harmonic sense".

7.3 Time–Death–Finitude

The reigning figure of the *Mahabharata*—that which sets two of the frame narratives and repeats within the frames—is the snake. The figure of the snake provokes and bears the effect of the curse. Curse is efficacious speech that has an almost irreversible effect—it is a performative without precedent in each case. But the curse provides a trace—a relation to the already there, a reception of another existence—a trace that connects different temporalities and existences (Kruta Yuga serpents with Dvapara humans). Kadruva curses (in Kruta Yuga) her snake progeny to die in the serpent *yaga* (ritual) of Janamejaya (on the eve of Kali Yuga).[7]

The serpents trouble Garuda's mother Vinata and suffer the wrath of Garuda who seeks the boon to turn snakes into his food. (The sisters Vinata and Kadruva and their episodes repeat with variation in the lives of Kunti and Gandhari). The deadly poison of Vasuki, who plays the rope in churning the ocean, disturbs the gods and demons. His brother, Sesha, is the calm and serene multi-hooded and multi-coiled bed of the God Vishnu; he is also said to bear the burden of the earth on his hood.

In various respects the figure of serpent stands for death as well as time. The coils of Sesha signify temporal repetition. Takshaka plays death when he smites King Parikshit viciously. Indeed, it is Takshaka who leads Udanka through the tunnels of time and exposes him to the enigmatic spectacle of time. It is only later that Udanka learns from his teacher about the wheel of time (a figure that repeats several times in the composition). Udanka learns that the snake world is the abode of time; he notices in that world, two women weaving with blue and white threads; their loom is a wheel of day and night and contains 12 leaves/arrows (months and year).

[6] "Sketching" Heideggerian phenomenological engagement with chronology (and citing Sanskrit traditions of reflection), Francoise Dastur writes (2000, p. 15), "Improvising is letting time 'happen,' trusting the favour of the 'moment', but also facing the unexpected and the risk of failure."

[7] Examples of curse can be multiplied: Takshaka steals Udanka's ear pendants—and is condemned; Shrungi sees the dead snake on his father (Shameechi) and curses that Takshaka kill Parikshit; Takshaka has another provocation in attacking the Kuru descendant: he is avenging Arjuna's Khandava massacre where Takshaka's wife was killed and his son barely escaped (to return in the war); Pramadvara (wife of the Bhrugu Ruru) dies of a snakebite and Ruru sets out (foreshadowing Janamejaya's *yaga*) to kill every snake that he comes across.

Six children (as seasons) turn the wheel. The relentless movement of time does its work in the snake world.

Temporality exposes the being (as time and being co-emerge and bond together) to at least five different affects: (i) It exposes the being to reckoning and counting (*kalyate samkhyayate anena kalah*—one counts with it); (ii) it provokes and urges (*kalayati prerayati va kalah*); (iii) it gives the duality of pleasure and sorrow (*dishyate sukha dukhadika maneneti dishtah*); (iv) induces people (*jana*) to indulge in worldly activity (*dishanti vyapriyantetra dishtah*); (v) indestructible, it is unchanging and unmoving (*nahanti na gachchati*—*aneha*) and can be known (*samyagayate samayah*).[8]

As can be seen "life"—the instantial, finitudinal existence—can be overwhelmed by any of these ruses of temporality—and each of these entangles life/existence to the machine of repetition. Time as counting, investment, provocations for vengeance pervades life: Bhima pledges vengeance after the dice game; time drowns one into the worldly as in the case of Duryodhana and his brothers; instants of life such as Yayati and Nala, Shakuntala and Vinata are shuttled between pleasure and sorrow by time; also, reckoning of time from *nimesha* to *kalpa*—from the blink of an eye to over eight billion years during which the emergence (*srushti*) and dissolution (*pralaya*) of the worldly forms and beings occur. The *Mahabharata* says that the universe has so far been created and dissolved six times and hints at the emergence of yet another beginning (*Sriman Mahabharatam* 2001, p. v.); indestructible, as long as the question of (being/life or existence comes forth as) the generative impulse is at work and binds us to life (we shall return to this later).

Time in all these motifs marks the finite destiny of what comes forth in the instant. The instantiated (that which emerges) is destined towards death; hence the terror of the figure of death—the serpent. But the finitude of existence and its ineluctable destiny—cessation—seems to suggest only the termination of the empirical, individuated existences. Such a terminal does not gain a status of destiny in the Sanskrit reflective traditions. For such finitude of individuated existence does not have the power to terminate the repetitive emergences of the phenomenal entities from coming forth. Any action—curse, vengeance and above all and in a word *desire*—can bind one to the generative impulse which brings forth entities and thus plunges one into the structure of repetition.

The *Mahabharata* in multiplying the modes of action through curse (Kadrua's, Bhrugu's, Brahma's etc.,) vengeance (Udanka's, Shrungi's, Bhima's, etc.) and desire (mostly as concupiscence—Parashara's, Shantanu's Yayati's, Dushyanta's, Devayani's), spectacularizes the power of the generative impulse—the sheer power of spawning heterogeneous species. The generative impulse instantiates the time-bound and finite existence (all that takes the *form* exposes itself to the terminus of cessation).

The *Mahabharata* is particular in identifying the figures of the *Bharata* as varied repetitions (*amsha*s) of others who had already existed. Repetition is the

[8] "*Kalo dishtopyanehapi samayopi* …" (Seshacharyulu 1989, p. 159).

multiple instantiation of what comes into existence.[9] Exposed to such ineluctable modes of being (repetition as continuity of species)—one cannot hope to free oneself completely from the logic of repetition. Any *desired* investment in freedom only binds one more to the generative impulse and its effects. That is, one cannot at an individuated level hope to escape the logic of repetition by abstaining from the generative process. Jaratkaru tries to do so and realizes the horror of what it does to his ancestors. Similarly, fearing the cessation of the Kuru lineage after Vichitravirya's concupiscent life, Vyasa is invoked to continue the line outside the marital bond. Whether parthenogenic, potentially illicit or pronouncedly species- and *genos*-mixing cohabitation, erotic relations may safeguard patronymic continuity in the context of the *Mahabharata*.

The repetitive structure bonds memories and binds one through the force of debt. One is indebted to the ancestors and one's existence is conditioned by the receptions of the past. One is impelled to free oneself from this originary structure of repetition only by *taking part in* the structure. The repetitive generative principle exposes one to a double bind: *you cannot leave it (voluntarily)—but you have to seek an individuated freedom from it*.

7.4 Modes of Composition

The force of the double bind can be comported with three related modes of symbolization in the *Mahabharata*: narrative, non-narrative and the *itihasa-recits*. As narrative temporally unfolds, it comports with what temporality exposes life to. Narrative, as *kavya*, *purana*, *natya* and *itihasa*, can render different temporal modes of being caught in the structure of repetition most effectively. But the narrative impulse that fleshes these forms also reiterates the repetition compulsion. The generative impulse manifests as narrative, time and being in the weaving of the *Mahabharata* composition. Narratives offer experiential accounts of the exigencies specific persons are exposed to and endure in a worldly life. They expose listeners and readers to experiential encounters, performative analogues of their own temporal existence. The multiple narrative clusters of the *Mahabharata* plurivocalize the generative principle. These clusters (Kuru/Puru *vamsa* cluster, Bhrugu cluster, etc.) are variedly elaborated; some have narratemes and others have elaborate narratives; some alternate with non-narrative verses. The narrative clusters hang on non-narrative fibres and strings.

[9] Among numerous such instantiations, we can sample some from the text: Thus, we notice that Bhishma is an *amsha* of one of the accursed Vasuvus (Prabhasa); Drona—Bruhaspati's, Drupada—Marutta's, Dushtadyumna—Agni's, Virata—Marutta's, Dhrutarashtra—a Gandharva king's, Vidura—Yama's, Karna—Narakasura's, Shantanu—Mahabhisha's, Kunti—Siddhi's, Madri—Buddhi's, Duryodhana—Kali's, Shakuni—Dvapara's, Ashvathhama—anger and lust's, Yudhishtar—Yama's, Bhima—Vayu's, Arjuna—Indra's, Nakula-Sahadeva—Ashvinis', Draupadi—Shachidevi's and Vyasa—Brahma's.

Apart from narrative clusters we notice *itihasic-recits* in the composition. These *recits* appear in a combination of narratives, narratemes, and dialogues (*samvadas*). On some occasions, the narrative motif is relatively more developed and on other occasions it appears simply as a starting frame of reference (as in the Bali-Indra *samvada*, Varshneya-*sishya* conversation). *Samvada* is a conversation in which one clarifies the thought and path for the seeker-questioner (such as Janamejaya and Shaunaka) in different contexts.

The primary scene of conversation in the context of the *Mahabharata* is the sanctioned gap in action during a fire ceremony that the sages in the forest undertake (this gap is called *karmantara*). That is, even the anachronic multiform episodic life accounts, woven with *samvada*s and non-narratives find a circumscribed space within a protracted ritual-performative activity—an activity which entirely puts to work the body to the accompaniment of melopoeiac chants. But what the sages, in the context of the *Mahabharata*, hear is itself a recapitulated repetition of another scene where another rendering of this magnum opus takes place during such a circumscribed caesura. The other rendering is also set in the *karmantara* intermission where Janamejaya has just terminated the devastating *sarpayaga*. If the Shudra (Ugrasravas) sings it for the Brahmin sages, the Brahmin sage Vaisampayana renders it to the Kshatriya Janamejaya.

If there is a single general problematic that has received extraordinary attention in the Sanskrit *vangmaya* it is the generative impulse—the drive that brings forth temporal-phenomenal and symbolic entities. The generative impulse is thematized through the extended proliferation of the narrative and *itihasic* clusters in the *Mahabharata*. That is, the circle multiplies genres and *genos*. The narrative *itihasic* strands persistently give form to the generative impulse or weave its effects. As such they too can be seductive. All the addressees in the composition—despite their varied accomplishments—are tempted by the seductive detours of the labyrinth. In the opening frame Shaunaka and his companions express the desire to listen only to *that* story which delights and which is unprecedented (*apurva*—unavailable in the past). Janamejaya intermittently interrupts Vaisampayana's recitation for detailed narrative elaboration (of Kuru genealogies). Yudhishtira is not free from this narrative allurement and entrapment. Everyone can get caught in the temptations of the narrative pulls that are repeatedly evoked by the Suta, Vaisampayana, Vyasa, Narada, Vidura, Markandeya, Krishna, Bhisma, Sanjaya and many others. The generative impulse proliferates in its *genos* forcefully.

The *itihasic-recits* incline more towards non-narrative chains. The Anugita in Ashwamedha parva, for instance, apparently begins only as a dialogue between a Brahmin and a Brahmani, but it remains substantially a recapitulation in a different (dialogic/narrative) mode of the import of the Gita that takes place in the Bhismaparva. Similarly, the Nahusha and Yaksha questions, and Vidura and Sanatsujata *samvada*s with Dhrutarashtra are patently non-narrative chains enframed in a *samvada* cluster. The itihasa-*samvada* elicits and configures a way of going about the world from the narrative residue in conversations. Dialogue—mainly inquisitive questioning or exposition—opens up a long response that presents desirable modes of being.

Interweaving and intervening in these two strands of the composition is the third strand of the non-narrative. This strand may have a residual dialogue form, but mainly unanchored by any narrative motif or *recit*. The non-narratives are condensed, reflective compositions that can either be deduced from, or which can enable one to navigate lived encounters in the world. After wading through the protracted but devastating experience of filial enmity and war, for example, Yudhishtara's experience of despondency could be captured in the aphorism: *ko mohah ka dukhah* (where there is bonding desire, there is sorrow) (*Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad* 1989, p. 1.4. 93). The aphoristic utterances may emerge from specifiable events and contexts, but remain irreducible to such contexts; the non-narrative elements are intelligible only in specific (albeit heterogeneous) instants of singular beings. The most outstanding of such non-narrative (but *vakovakya-samvada*) strands devoid of any *udanta*s is the Bhagavad Gita. Embroidered with narrative-*itihasic* clusters, the non-narrative strand spreads like a massive banyan tree in Shanti and Anushasanaparvas.

The weave of narrative, *itihasic* and non-narrative strands compose the *Mahabharata* as a polyphonic ensemble. The significance of such a composition does not depend on any coherent culminating unity of all the elements. There is no single line that orders the elements into a sequential track in the *Mahabharata*.[10] The narrative and non-narrative strands are put to work at various lengths in divergent contexts. If narrative clusters are rapidly played out at one instant (as in the Adiparva), the non-narrative strands are intermittently woven (as in the sages'—Shaunaka, Narada, Romasha, Markandeya—narrative accounts in the Aranyaparva). If the *itihasic-recits* elaborate *samvada*s, the non-narrative notes surround and permeate all the compositional elements persistently with varied amplifications.

Yet, it must be stressed that the non-narratives are not categorically opposed to narratives. One can do away with narrative elaboration by strategically alluding to or deploying narratemes—bare references to expandable (but unexpanded) elements. Sanskrit tradition is replete with such compositions. Mantra as a unit of composition in Sanskrit traditions is essentially a non-narrative genre; mantras are even seen as non-semantic.[11]

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[10] Telugu scholars argue that the varied compositional strands and motifs interrupt any coherent and continuous account from easily emerging in a sequential order in the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. Whereas for these scholars the Telugu rendering overcomes this and offers continuities; this claim cannot be sustained as the Telugu version too carries the different compositional strategies mentioned above—strategies that plurivocalize the composition. Cf. Ramabrahmam and Bhaskararao (1994, p. 53).

[11] Mantra is that which is repeated in the *manas,* or mind (*mananat trayate iti mantra*: that which is recalled and repeated in *manas*) and which saves the human from the undesirable and from that which descends on us (such as sorrow or loss—that which *samsara* tangles us in). But mantra can lend itself to elucidation. It leaves clues to such elaboration. Elaborations can be commendatory or dismissive; they can refer to precedents—that which others have done (*parakruti*)—for example, Janaka ruled with the knowledge of his "self"; and the reference can be unverifiable, imagined; such a reference can aim at strengthening the specific context where such other work or event is alluded to.

The three compositional strands configure three distinct but related modes of being in the world. The narrative clusters compose the physical, worldly mode of being. The narrative can also offer an opportunity for the listener to configure or reorient the instant of his existence. The narrative helps relate oneself to the world; it relates duration to an instant of time (as in the case of Janamejaya at a specific instant gains access to his illustrious genealogies). The *itihasa-recits*,[12] while retaining residual narrative elements, open up dialogic inquiry into the challenges of decision in the confusing dualities of existence. The non-narratives are oriented to address singular entities in divergent contexts. The ear and the heart of the addressee must wait to receive, resonate and respond to the force of the utterance in the singular physical–mechanical existence of the being. The non-narrative utterances require embodied meditative responses and reflective enactments in the singular contexts of existence; in a word, a praxial experiential reorientation of one's being in the world. They are intimations of action knowledge.

But if narrative manifests the recursive generative impulse, freedom from such a structure seems to require the cultivated suspension of that impulse. For given the apparent complexity of the repetitive structure and also the absurdity and meaninglessness of its durational structure (where duration co-belongs to every instant), paradoxically all narratives will always be superfluous, redundant and inadequate. This brings us back to the double bind of immersed or involved yet suspended and distanced modes of being in the world. The *Mahabharata* takes recourse to the non-narrative mode of symbolization to suspend various forms of the narrative mode such as *akhyana, upakhyana, udanta, akhyayika, katha*; it is this non-narrative mode that addressed the recursive structure of generativity for well over a millennium in Sanskrit reflective traditions.

Consequently, it is difficult to determine the movement of narratable nodes; their instantiation isn't regulated by any thematic-narrative logic of common order. Recursively manifesting, differentially instanced, the events and episodes of the composition (genres), like the addressors and addressees (*genos*), spread pluridimensionally. But even the discontinuous narratable nodes are also interrupted by the non-narrative elements. In other words, every narratable node woven with non-narrative aphorism, improvisationally expanded or contracted, forms the radial ensemble of the *Mahabharata*.[13] The *Mahabharata* is a weave of such narrative

[12] In contrast to mantras all *purana*s and *itihasa*s are *arthavada*s. *Artha* here is understood as uttered (*shabda*) articulation of the desirable. In other words, *arthavada*s are narratable accounts. The purpose of all such narratable elaborations is to enable the listeners to fortify their orientation or decision. But not all such modes of elaboration provide truth. They are only resources for accessing truth through discernment. Sanskrit *vangmaya* is replete with such elaborative, elucidatory modes. These modes belong to what is called substantialist (*artha*) argumentation (*vada*). Cf. Rao (2006, pp. 1–18, 54, 434).

[13] Such logic of condensation and elaboration is at work when Sanskrit compositions are rendered into the *bhasha* domains in India. Thus, Nannaya changes the sequential order of certain episodes of the Vyasa version (the Sakuntala and Yayati episodes are reversed), and expands many of the episodes. Tikkana later on excises the whole of the Bhagavad Gita in his rendering of Vyasa into Telugu. Indeed, Nannaya declares that his composition will be (apart from poetic

flows and non-narrative caesuras. It can be argued that the reflective, creative and performative traditions of India are deeply shaped by such an interweaving of symbolic modes.

7.5 Life and Symbolization: Bioculturality

The logic—if there can be one—of generative force brings forth *genos*, genres and *jati*s; it externalizes itself in biological and symbolic modes. It is impossible to search for a genetic relation between the biological and symbolic forms—for every such *search* is contingent upon the structural precedence of the symbolic domain, which must preexist for such a search to be possible. Although this condition of the symbolic is not culture specific, we need to inquire into culture specific articulations of the biological and the symbolic, *jati* and genre expressions of the symbolic. The significance of the biological cannot seem to escape the symbolic, but the former can never be reduced to the latter. Thought of existence cannot be extricated from the existence of thought.

Biocultural formations (such as *jati*s) in the Indian context evince an attunement to the symbolic. Even as they affirm the generative and exteriorizing power of the symbol, these formations by and large are drawn to embodied and enacted modes of symbolization.[14] It is precisely through these performative modes, which put the body to work, that the *Mahabharata* proliferates across divergent *jati*s in plurivocal and pluridimensional modes (the Chindu performances, the Erukala

(Footnote 13 continued)
narrative dexterity and verbal eloquence) a treasure of multi-flavoured, aphoristic diversity of reflections (*nana ruchirartha suktinidhi*). Cf. *Mahabharatamu* (2000/2006: 1.1.26, p. 19). Such *sukti*s (worthy phrases of contextual relevance) can be seen as ultimate distillations of worldly experience in general, warranting reflection. Such a reflection can be fleshed out, or can be deduced from the narratives. While *sukti*s may lend themselves to narrative elaboration, they are not contingent upon such elaboration (as in the case with Bhisma's counsel on different dharmas). As connecting threads, they draw minimal frame-narratemes (such as Indra's meeting with Bali, etc.).

[14] It is true that the *Mahabharata* is associated with the divine human-animal scribe Ganesha, but this mythical scribality hardly gains any significance in the rendering of the *Mahabharata*s. The pluralized disseminators of this composition—Narada for the gods, Devala for the ancestors, Suka for the Gandharvas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Sumanta for snakes and Vaishampayana for the humans—are all the reciters and performers of the composition. Humans, beyond the Kuru lineage, do not get to hear from this singer of the composition directly but through the mediated frame of Ugrashravas who in turn recites for the sages of Naimisharanya. This multiplication of the performers and their audiences makes Gayatri Spivak's (1991, pp. 103–104) statement that "the immense poem is ostensibly sung by the poet Vyasa", strictly speaking, incorrect. Nowhere does one hear Vyasa singing the *Mahabharata*. Similarly, her claim that the *Mahabharata* is a "battle between two ancient and related lineages" is inaccurate. The Kauravas and Pandavas belong to the same Kuru/Puru lineage.

Mahabharata, the Gondi *Mahabharata* and the Pahadi *Mahabharata*s, Pandavani, Naradiya kirtana, Yakshagana, and Kathakali, etc., circulate spectacularly).

If the generative impulse binds the body to the recursive structure, if the body gets caught in the repetition machine—there is no guarantee that the body generated-symbol can free the body from the machine. Therefore the symbol per se, in its exclusivity, distanced and dissociated from the body is not considered efficacious enough to address the question of freedom in the Sanskrit reflective traditions. This is not a rejection of the symbol as such, but what appears to be a deliberated indifference towards alienated symbol. The enacted, embodied, performed articulations of the body and symbol gain prominence, instead. If freedom from the repetition compulsion requires cultivation of the ability to suspend the generative impulse from within embodied existence, the same attunement can be extended to the work of the symbol as well.[15]

Discrete instantial existences are figured as *agami sanchita prarabdha*s, that is, embodied gatherings and anticipations. Such existences must be lived through in the physical form of the body. No substitution can take the place of such existences. Therefore no narrative strategy, no seductive rhetoric, can liberate one from the ineluctable need of living through. Narratives are symbolic instantiations of biocultural existences. This necessity of living through is configured as *karmasutra* in Sanskrit reflective traditions; it is the praxial or perforamative fiber of existence. *Karmasutra* entails a temporal-phenomenal event and thus opens the chance of improvisation.

Karma is at once the act or activity and the effects of acts in a specific birth. There are no originary and terminal instances of *karma*: there cannot be any such as long as the instantiation of the body—or the body effect—occurs. *Karma* is also a persistent—if only tacit—call for changing or modifying the activity of the body. In other words, *karma* is not some iron law of determinism but it is at once the open-ended possibility of a future or promise. The only way to negotiate with this uncanny force of repetition appears to be to (at)tend (to) the most irreducible material instantiation of this force: the body. Tending the body would involve patiently tending the most forceful impulses of desire and memory non-coercively, without application of force. The body must be set to work to negotiate with the acts of repetition. The task of reorienting one's being is caught between how/to what one listens and how/what one experiences form the embodied symbolic modes. There is neither a guaranteed continuity nor a transparent passage between perception (listening) and experience (learning). Once again the question of experience is based on the enduring aporia of endowment (what one receives) and cultivation (and what one does with it); the orientation of being through experience is inextricably caught in the operations of desire (the element of the generative impulse).

[15] This reflective attunement towards the body and symbol is most economically captured in Panini when he contends that in the formulation of the *sutra*, economizing on the syllable is like withholding of a drop of semen. Cf. Chakravarty (2001, pp. 1–24).

7.6 Repetition Compulsion

The *Mahabharata* provides countless instances of desire as the dynamic of the phenomenal and recursive structure of existence. Desire mediates the relation between listening and experience. Desire is the phenomenal entity's obsession with itself and with what it does for its gratification. Ineradicable, desire assumes varied guises and reiterates the crisis of existence. The two most prominent manifestations of desire in the *Mahabharata* are eros and anger-vengeance (*kama* and *krodha* and their variations—*trishna* and *moha*). These forces of desire move transgenerationally: Vasishta's grandson Parashara, who learns about his father's death while in the womb decides to eradicate all the Rakshasas in a *sattra* (ritual). In another epoch the Bhrugu Paurva—conceived in the thigh—blinds the Kshatriya clan for its attempt to eliminate the Bhrugus. These two events repeat in the lives of Janamejaya and Parushurama respectively. Drona's and Drupada's mutual mortal animosity binds their existence. Takshaka's attack on Parikshit itself is a revenge on Arjuna's colossal destruction of Khandavavana. Like a flash of lightning, the quick anger of multiple sages strikes their targets mercilessly. The anger of Durvasa, Viswamitra, Parashara, Chyavana and Kindama (who curses Pandu) is phenomenal.

Equally uncontrollable and with comparable consequences is the force of the erotic or concupiscent desire. Many Kuru kings—such as Vichitravirya, and before him, the Puru Vyushitasya, and Nahusha, and later on Pandu and others die in the mortal embrace of the erotic. It is not that the force strikes just the passion filled Kshatriya clans alone. Everybody is exposed to this devouring force. Sages with impeccable cultivation of revered learning of the heritage, with relentless disciplining of their existence, with uncompromising rigour of austerities are overwhelmed by the erotic force. Parashara, Bharadvaja, Sharadvanta, Prushata, and a whole lot of others succumb to the erotic force and release their seed (Bharadvaja in a pot, Sharadvanta in a pond; Prushata under a leaf)—and their seed fructifies outside the womb (*ayonijas*).

But above all, the erotic force possesses Draupadi repeatedly in all her three lives that are recounted by Vyasa himself in the *Mahabharata*. First when she served the leper sage Maudgalya as his wife in the name of Nalayani/Indrasena: When the sage gives her a boon for her years of devotion she seeks erotic fulfilment in five different avatars (of human and animal) of the sage—who provides her this life for thousands of years; yet unquenched of the thirst she's reborn as a daughter of a Kashi king and does penances to seek a boon from Shiva—again for sexual fulfillment and Shiva promises her five husbands of divine *amsha*s—which is fulfilled in her latest repetition as Draupadi. The force strikes all mortals including the gods (Ganga and Indra, etc.). Gandharvas like Angaraparna, Rakshasas like Sundopasunda and the Puru Samvarana (who loves Tapati—Surya's daughter).

As the generative impulses of action, manifestations of eros and anger lend themselves to narrativization. The *Mahabharata* is replete with narratives of vengeful and indulgent erotic drives. It intermittently exposes the listener/reader to

the recursive entrapment of the generative-narrative impulse. No wonder an important part of this plurivocal network concerns genealogical accounts. But the *Mahabharata*, as suggested earlier, renders these selectively. Nowhere are these accounts controlled by any mundane chronological or sequential pattern. What the genealogical accounts suggest is the necessity of "continuity" (of *jati*) and ineluctability of the force of desire. There appears to be no counterforce that would regulate the generative impulse that continues and contaminates genealogies/ *genos*.

Desire conditions the embodied experience. In fact, the body itself is the effect and medium of desire. Desire is associated and identified with one of the (internal) perceptual faculties called *manas*. In the *Mahabharata*, *manas* signifies time as well as desire. Both these forces are figured as serpents. The movement of *manas* is unpredictable like the movement of serpent and time. These powerful forces of finitudinal existence and death are (im)possible to overcome. Desire is the body's self indulgence that denies or forgets the other (*para*) that inhabits the body complex.

The *Mahabharata* in a way begins and ends with the two kinds of *yaga*s aimed at sacrificing desire: Janamejaya's *sarpayaga* and *ashwamedha* and Yudhishtara's *ashwamedha* (after the genocidal war) respectively. In fact Janamejaya's *yaga*, though prior in narrative temporality is a repetition of an earlier one performed by the distraught Yudhishtara at the end after the war. Here it must be noted that *ashwa* (horse) is yet another vigorous image of time and desire. What is externally objectified as serpent, horse, time and desire are internally, experientially configured as *manas* in the *Mahabharata*. None of these forces, however, can be terminated.

The phenomenal being with its perceptive/cognitive faculties, tells Bhisma to Yudhishtara, along with the force of the inarticulable (*avyakta*) as central axis revolves as a stone wheel, and over which presides *para*-other. It is in such a circle that the entire moving and unmoving entities of the universe are unstably located, out of control, contretemps. Only a reflective discerning eye can sense the temporal phenomenal revolution of being and time. And how can those who are swept away by the waves of concupiscence, anger, fear, misery, and possessiveness sense the enigma of the body and time, asks Bhisma in Shantiparva (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, Shantiparva 2.4, pp. 617–620, 673).

Desire, driven to concupiscence, forgets the non-indulgent other that constitutively comes forth with/in the body. There appears to be just the difference of a breath or of an accent between the self-indulgent and the other or *para*-oriented experience of being in the world. But such a radical difference of the latter kind of experience can only be discerned in the actual embodied, praxial modes of being. Desire confounds the difference and forces one to indulge. Such confusion and foreclosing of the experience of the other are dangerous for life says Sanatsujata in his counsel to Dhrutarashtra after the war. Here desire is death, he says. For the desire (as vengeful rage) provokes and erupts physical action and this in turn will bind one in the relentlessly (en)circling machine (*ghatiyantra*—like the potter's wheel) called *samsara* (Rao 2006, p. 246).

7.7 Responsive Cultivations

The *Mahabharata* also embodies and contains within it the instances of an extended *failure* of what can hold things in place. For what holds can hold only situationally. There is no overarching logic of holding that works in accord with a homogeneous or determined destiny. In other words, what holds can hold only improvisationally. One can surely defy the rhythms of improvisation. Desire in its concupiscent or vengeful avatar can amplify itself monotonically. Such manifestations of desire reduce biocultural existences to machinic repetition. Improvisational modes of being, with their nuanced transformation of the received, may intimate the possibilities of freedom. Freedom must be experienced as unprogrammable existence; it must be irreducible to machinic repetition. Freedom must emerge in a mode of living that while abiding by the laws of repetition—of birth and death, biocultural technicity (evolving of the body and the iterative relation of the heritage)—cultivates distance and difference from the machine of repetition. Freedom is a mode of being outside *in* the biocultural machine of existence; freedom must be incalculable. Praxial improvisation of being in the world with others configures freedom in finitudinal existence. There is no normatively idealized unique path of realizing this freedom. No one can guarantee such monological passage way. The non-narrative nodes of the *Mahabharata*, anamnestically reiterate the absence of an absolute ideal:

Shrutayo vibhinnanaiko rushiryasya matampramanam
Dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam

(*Sriman Mahabharatam* 1997, p. 50)

(Most compositions of the heritage (*shruti*) are heterogeneous; neither is there a seer/*rishi* whose position alone can be a legitimate ideal. The essence of dharma resides in the grotto.)

Everyone has to grope and there is no singular authentic path to access the essence of dharma that holds the finitudinal phenomenal world and relations in it. Dharma is both an endowed as well as a cultivated resource. It *appears* to impose passivity on entities, but it also requires working out. It can be repressed, but it resurges in different avatars. Yet this does not guarantee that a programmed or calculated rendering of the *shruti*s would lead one on the right path and somehow provide the freedom. Even this medicine of heritage can turn into the poison of the machine through the desire's indulgence and obsession:

Pathkah pathakashchaiva ye chanye shastra chintakah
sarve vyasanino murkha yah kriyavan sa panditaha

(*Sriman Mahabharatam* 1997, p. 48)

(All those who only recite and teach the Vedas and *shastra*s are indulgent idiots obsessed in a futile routine.)

Only those who praxially receive the Vedic import can really be called the pandita. Contextually uttered but unbound to any context rigidly this aphoristic-reflective verse, like the earlier one warns one about the programmability of what

one receives and its machinic repetition. Yet the verse and the context (Yudhishtara's responses to the Yaksha's questions about *jati*) in which it is uttered, unequivocally allude to the specificity of the very distinct and singular (Brahmin) biocultural formations and insists on the praxial mode of being of that existence.

Although the verse refers to one specific genos (*jati*), it can be extended without contradiction to all other formations of existence as well. This does not, however, mean that what works for one *jati* (Brahmin) is valid for the rest. The context of discussion concerns the singularity of biocultural formations. What makes a formation distinct? Can inherited modes of going on bestow upon one distinction and difference? The verse is firmly negative with regard to such programmability of existence.

In all the heterogeneous biocultural formations, the deadening and routinizing pull of the machinic mode of being persists. Such dead life can do little for affirming the difference and distinction of the internally varied *genos*. It is only the improvisational mode of being, and cultivation of the endowed, that enables one to affirm the singularity of each instantial existences. Cultivation is a praxial mode of being—putting into practice one's reflective faculties. Here endowment is a cultivation that forms over protracted and indeterminable temporality. Endowment is a biocultural formation that moves on elements whose emergence and circulation are difficult to fathom decisively. Yet, the paradox of endowment is that it can come forth or manifest only in singular, instantial and finite existence. It is only in this temporal finitude that the interminable question—*what do you do with what you have?* —the question of articulating cultivation and endowment—must be addressed and responded to.

Responses to such a question configure different modes of being in the world. The *Mahabharata* provides us ample opportunity to reflect on the preferred difference in modes of being. It demonstrates through its labyrinthine passageways what people do with what they have, with their endowment and their capability for cultivation—while being with others.

7.8 Deflections of Being

The marked difference in cultivating modes of being can be seen clearly when we notice the process of making of Yudhishtara and Duryodhana. While all the distinct polyphonic strands of the composition are braided in the preparation of the former, the latter's existence is monotonal in its exclusively self-oriented account. Attempts to counsel the latter through the detours of narrative or *itihasa* are rare in the *Mahabharata*. But even when such attempts are made—as Kanva, Narada and Bhisma try to dissuade him from any confrontation with the Pandavas in the Udyogaparva—his ear remains unreceptive and his heart stern. What he hears does little to budge him from his path of self-oriented drives. The instant of his existence blinds him to the recursive duration in his cultivation.

During the Ghosha Yatra in Aranyaparva—after his humiliation at the hands of a Yaksha—he is taken in a trance to the underworld. There, the demon leaders own

him up as their representative and they inspire him to fight and destroy the Pandavas. They promise an imminent victory to him. Even when the instant of his existence provides him the opportunity to transform his mode of being, his circumstances reinforce the only endowment that he wishes to cultivate. Whether for Yudhishtara or Duryodhana, the instant of existence is a chance to praxially cultivate a mode of being in the world, a reflective-experiential learning as living.

If the instant is the finite moment of chance, duration is the relentless recursion of instants without origin and end. Duration, however, is not a cumulative mass of ephemeral instants. It indicates the repetitive structure that results from the kinds of cultivation and modes of being preferred in the finite existences. What is common to the instantial and durational is that they concern entirely finite existences. Although the instant appears to be the most essential moment-form that really matters, it cannot be severed from the durational. The latter certainly has a role in composing the endowments of every singular existence.

Every instantial-phenomenal existence follows others before us. Therefore cultivation requires the sense of why, how and what the durational intimates us (of the other) in the instantial existence. When one fails to listen to the intimations of the durational, when one indulges in the present as the isolated moment/event of one's existence, one condemns oneself to a future of machinic repetition. That is, such repetition compulsion leaves no chance for any horizon of anticipation for being and time; it leaves no scope for reflecting on and responding to the enigma of existence and endowment.

All the compositional strands in the *Mahabharata* are singularly and collectively oriented to affect singular beings to enable them to act and decide in situations of crisis and decision. But only when one prepares oneself to receive such intimations, that is, when one learns to sense the durational dimension of finitudinal existence, can one hope to resist the presumption of auto-immunity of the instant, and desire's compulsive indulgence in the present—the *now only* of one's existence.

The power of desire (as *trishna* and *moha*) manifests in two related ways. One of the most significant and almost ineluctable ways this comes forth is the compounded declaration of one's absolute autonomy and agentive sovereignty (the "I"-pull or *aham*); the second one is the accumulative appropriative impulse, the corrosive but insatiable possessiveness that drives one to own every tangible (objectual) and intangible entity (the "mine"-drive *mama*). These manifestations of desire reduce one to the instantial existence, and induce one to assume temporality to be a repetition or extension of the present. No wonder why, despite several attempts in different voices in different forms to alert Dhrutarashtra to his indulgence in the double trap of desire (more in the form of "mine-drive", *mama*), he remains caught in the cloying filial binds. He thus reduces the durational to the finitude of the present.

The polyvocal and multi-strand address of the *Mahabharata* is minimalized in the case of Duryodhana. Despite his best efforts, even after the unjust and connived elimination of his father just two days earlier, Ashwatthama, just a while before the brutal elimination of Karna on the battlefield, approaches Duryodhana for truce. In the counsel he volunteers to persuade the Pandavas for peace and save the

lives of the remaining Kauravas, including Karna—in vain. Duryodhana laughs at the counsel and presses the troops for yet another onslaught—which concludes the day with the sorrowful end of Karna. Duryodhana's total disregard of all intimations or warnings derives from the supreme confidence in his sovereign power, his agentive autonomy (the "I-pull", *aham*). He ends up cultivating and aggravating his endowment and eschews the chance of discerning the work of desire.

7.9 Transformative Receptions

The *Mahabharata* regards nothing in the world that needs to be learnt (especially with regards to the ends of man) as outside its purview. What is not in it cannot be found anywhere else:

Yadihasti tadanyatra yannehasti na tattkvachit
(cited in *Mahabharatamu*: "Preface", 2000–2007, p. xxi; Rao 2006, p. 1)

(All that is required, for the purpose of the ends of man, can be found here and what is not here cannot found anywhere else.)

The *Mahabharata* disseminates through a detour what otherwise remains confined to a determined set of addressees in the Sanskrit *vangmaya*. The custodians and recipients of all the *shruti*s*, smruti*s and *shastra*s of the tradition for millennia were from the *trivarna* (three categories of communities). It is in such a deeply differentiated and demarcated set of addressees and addressors, with distinct individuated practices and modes of learning, which we come across this composition of staggering magnitude. The *Mahabharata* emerges from within the much delimited confines of Sanskrit *vangmaya*. The *Mahabharata* breaches a passageway across all imaginable constituencies of receivers. More importantly, the one who forges such a transgressive composition is also the very same person who in the first place is said to have divided the sources of learning and demarcated the constituencies for their dissemination and reception. The *Mahabharata*, like the *geya* Veda that Rajasekhara refers to,[16] will spread across all those women, Shudras and affiliated to (but not within the fold of) the *trivarna* and beyond:

Stri shudra dvija bandhunam trayi na shrutigochara
iti Bharatamakhyanam krupaya muninakrutam.[17]

(For all the women, Shudras and degraded *dvija*s (the twice-born) who lack the prerogative to access *shrutis* Vyasa in his kindness has composed the Bharata *katha*.)

[16] For Rajasekhara, endowed and cultivated recitation of *kavya* is as important as the unparalleled composition of *kavya*. If he sought a place for literary inquiry among the celebrated Vedangas, he affirmed song (*geya* Veda) the elevated place among the Vedas; he called *gana* Veda the *panchama* (the fifth: "*panchamo geya Vedah*") Veda. Unlike the Vedas, which are open to only the determined addressees, this *panchama* Veda (as pointed out earlier) is open to all the *varna*s (biocultural formations)

[17] This *shloka* appears in the *Bhagavata*. Cited in Purushottamu (1993, p. 801).

Henceforth, the destinies, destinations and the modes of being *of* this incomparable song of songs forever will remain open and inexhaustible.[18] The mighty compendium spreads across the imports of the Vedic reflective-creative traditions through a detour. The detour is the sonic passageway forged by the (non-)narrative and *itihasic* strands. In a way the *Mahabharata* shows what it says. In its expansive and intricate weave it brings forth and enumerates a multitude of beings caught in the seductive but exhausting and distressing webs of desire. The *Mahabharata* shows the destiny of such multitudes, exposes the power of desire that brings them forth and the recursive actions they indulge.

7.10 Reorientations

One of the most significant aspects of the compositions in the mnemocultural Sanskrit *vangmaya* is its epistemic role in reorienting modes of being in the world. If life is an exploration in the enigma of our finitudinal being, this *vangmaya* reiterates the necessity of praxial learning in singular and collective existences. But to provide any response to this question all learning must be praxial—otherwise, it will be of dispensable worth. Everybody can receive and respond to the experiential-praxial learning. While all learning and responding remains singular and individual it can also be effective in general. Each of the internally differentiated *jati*s is endowed with or exposed to such a task. How one receives and responds to the double move of learning experientially configures one's destiny in the world.

Although the custodians and recipients of the Sanskrit reflective–creative traditions are a determined constituency, the addressee of the *shruti*s is certainly a *sadhaka*, a seeker. A seeker is someone caught in the enigma of existence in the world is on the path of exploring the body complex that brings forth and exposes him to the finitudinal and phenomenal existence. The *shruti*s offer *upadesha*—a certain mode of imparting the secrecy of experiential learning. The *sadhaka* must receive and respond to this learning and attune himself to it. The valued response is the cultivation of an immersive mode of being and going about in the world. The Sanskrit reflective traditions commend a praxial response, rather than a verbal or logical description. What is received must anamnestically be reiterated in silence

[18] From Vyasa's divided bards and their constituencies of the *Mahabharata* to the responsive receptions of Indian *bhasha*s, from heterogeneous mnemocultural traditions (ranging from the Patua bards of Bengal to Gonds of Adilabad, from the Pandvanis of Himachal to pig-herds of Telangana, from Kashmiris to Terukkuttu and Kudiyattam, from divergent sculptural forms—of Pattadakkal and Hampi—to Kalamkari paintings, from German Indologists to Peter Brooks and from the bardic-oral renderings—of Uttarakhand to Meos of Rajasthan and women's songs of other places to multiple palm-leaf *grantha*s, from Sukthankar's print absolutism to John Smith's digital repository), the *Mahabharata* continues to morph and transform itself into what receives it—while certainly affecting what it comes into.

and meditatively experienced. The arena of this mnemopraxial existence is none other than the body. Given that the body itself is the medium and effect of desire there is no guarantee that the learning and response can ever take place, nor does every one receive and respond in uniform ways. Desire can entrap even the mnemopraxial learning, even when the learning is oriented to cultivating non-coercive tapering off of desire. The implied addressee of the Sanskrit reflective traditions, therefore, is the one who exposes himself to such learning and persistently cultivates what he is endowed with in such mnemopraxial learning.

Conceived from within the Sanskrit reflective traditions, transforming what it receives, multiplying the addressees beyond the conserving confines of its provenance, the *Mahabharata* unequivocally performs the menopraxial imports of *shruti*s*, smruti*s and *purana*s. Despite its heterogeneous recipients, the *Mahabharata* assumes the possibility of the implied addressee as a *sadhaka*. There is no guarantee, however, that this composition will have an assured success in finding the exemplary addressee—either within or outside its modes of being.

As argued earlier, the *Mahabharata*'s modes of being, the intricate strands, serpentine detours and the multiple frames that weave the composition are formed by the narrative, *itihasic* and non-narrative fibers. These strands, clusters and frames not only breach a detour but provide interminable relays into a deeply recursive anteriority. As pointed out earlier, every major figure in the *Mahabharata* is an aspect (*amsha*) of a varied manifestation of an anterior being; similarly, every reception of the composition across the heterogeneous spatio-temporal and singular-plural biocultural formations affirms the transformed dispersal and survival of the Vyasa *Mahabharata*.

It is always possible to track these relays and dispersals. Such tracking has been the professional forte of Indologists over the last hundred years. Although the *Mahabharata* declares itself to be all-encompassing, the peregrinations and transformations of the *Mahabharata* until the colonial era have never received any cumulative, archontic attraction in India. Neither Anandavardhana nor Abhinavagupta even recounts the basic plot of any part of the composition. No one seems to count the narratives.[19]

[19] Is it by accident that the "*akhyana* theory" debates emerged in the 19th century (German) Indology? (Prose) Narrative appears to be the chosen passageway of European scholars to make sense of Veda *vangmaya*. It seems to me that the choice of such a passageway is deeply determined by 18th and 19th century debates about the place of myth in European antiquity. On the two routes such debates have taken in Europe, cf. Detienne (2005, esp. Chaps. 1 and 2). It seems to me that none of these debates, especially in the Indian context, have bothered to discuss the peculiar indifference to the narrative on the one hand and the epistemic status of non-narrative that was profoundly and extensively at work in Sanskrit compositions. On the contrary, the epistemic reduction of narrative in early Sanskrit compositions is seen as a deliberate repression of history by some Indological scholars. This position once again only reinforces the (European) narrative-historical mode as a normative paradigm. European privileging of the narrative appears to be entirely based on European response to its "originary" figures—Homer and Hesiod (Heredotus), whereas Sanskrit reflective compositions point to other modes of being in the world. For "*akhyana* theory", cf. Patton (1996, pp. 46–47, 200–201, 53–54) about repression of history.

7.11 Double Binds of Living

The question this unparalleled composition seems to pose is, what does one do with such a multi-stranded weave of clusters, *upadesha*s, performatives and interrogations? The question needs addressing from inside as well as outside the composition. The *Mahabharata* on the one hand embodies the generative impulse and proliferates as *genos* and genres. On the other hand, it emphasizes the necessity to pursue a passageway beyond the machinic circle as we are thrown into it with others. How does one respond to such a double bind? This is the most ineluctable question that the Sanskrit reflective traditions in general and the *Mahabharata* in particular perpetually pose.

While the double bind is common to all phenomenal-temporal entities, one is required to receive and respond to it in one's irreducible singularity. Here a common lot does not erase singularities; for each entity can respond to what it receives differently.[20] That is, the commonality of the clinamen—the incessant drift and flow of particulate elements—can manifest differently and the singularity of each emergence cannot be reduced to the temporal-physical finitude of the emerging form. The duration of the swerve and flow of the clinamen and their confluence, dispersal and dissolution remain intractable but palpable in the instantiation of the singular entity.

As pointed out earlier, the moment of decision is entirely contingent upon how one relates the instant to duration; the singularity of one's swerve depends upon how one receives the intimations of duration. The *Mahabharata* contains at least four different responses to time and being in the world: (i) One can choose the instantial over the durational (as the Duryodhana group does). (ii) One can increasingly seek varied occurrences that appear parallel to one's instantial-temporal existence. These can (as in the case of Yudhishtara or Arjuna) enable one to affirm a course of action and abide by it. (iii) One may discern the determining force of duration in the instant, enabling one to prepare for the future (as in the case of the sages Vyasa, Narada, Markandeya, who intimate Yudhistira intermittently). (iv) Yet another singular response can be to immerse oneself in, and yet remain distanced from the temptations and tribulations within temporality (as in the case of Krishna or of ordinary Brahmins who practise *unchavrutti*). These four differing responses are brought forth by the generative impulse itself. The first two firmly (albeit differently) reiterate the circle of binds and bonds. The limit of their responses remains within the horizon of the gyrating circle. For the heaven or hell that their responses endow them ultimately is once again firmly caught in the finite and ephemeral dualism of pleasure and pain. If exposure to learning reinforces Duryodhana's indulgence in the instantial, he remains caught and whatever he cultivates cannot promise any opening beyond the circle.

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[20] Tikkana shows the commonality of *adhibhuta*s—the material elements between a tree and the human being. Cf. *Mahabharatamu* (2000–2007, Shantiparva, 2.4, pp. 536–543).

In contrast, Yudhishtara's learning and the process of preparation is extensive and intense. He is deeply inquisitive about the subtleties of modes of being and attentive to what he receives in terms of preceding parallels (other instantiations of existence in adversity or rectitude—as the *itihasa*s of Nala, Rama, Janaka and innumerable others show). If Shaunaka, Vyasa and Markandeya and others impart him with mnemopraxial learning before the war, Bhisma does it after the war. He puts his learning to work in moments of crisis (e.g., Yaksha, Nahusha episodes). He is exemplary in cultivating what he is endowed with—*in a certain way*. He cultivates his being in such a way that the instance of his existence is informed and sanctioned by the durational learning. This cultivation profoundly binds him to the demanding worldly situations where he responds/acts with rectitude, guided by the contextually appropriate dharma-action.

7.12 Action Knowledge

In the Shantiparva, Yudhishtara is reminded and counselled about dharma—the contextually required mode of being and acting. But this very instant of existence is utterly unbearable for Yudhishtara. Remorse for eliminating his kin en masse grips him. The remorse reduces the king to the present moment of existence; the recent past weighs him down in the present. Life as little more than the instant of one's presumed existence captures and binds him to the present. In order to dispel precisely such reductionism about life, throughout the Shantiparva innumerable events of other epochs are invoked by various counsellors (Bruhaspati, Varshneya, Narada, etc.).

The efficacy of dharma can only be discerned praxially. All exhortations about internally differentiated dharma are appeals to singularities of existence.[21] These recalled instants affirm that no singular instant of existence is entirely and absolutely autonomous. Every instant is internally divided from within. Duration heterogenizes the formation of the instant. For duration constitutes the instant and conditions the possibility of action in the specific instantiations of existence. Repeated with variation, the binds and bonds of existences enable phenomenal coming into being. The binds and bonds are the medium and effects of desire and they capture the body even as they bring it forth. Yudhishtara is overpowered by

[21] The Shanti and Anushashanikaparva are closely knitted with counsels concerning contextual articulations of dharma (Yudhishtara asks over 200 questions to which Bhisma responds in various modes—direct, indirect, allusive, recapitulative, elaborative, explicatory, anecdotal and exemplificatory.) In fact, Shanti and Anushashanikaparvas are varied repetitions of Aranyaparva. Already in the Aranyaparva, Yudhishtara is extensively counseled on the imports of dharma. Other instants reiterate the work of dharma-action in different temporal contexts such as Janaka's sorrow at the loss of kith and kin, the ineluctability of mortality even in the case of extraordinary rulers—the Shodasha Maharajas and various other episodic instants are invoked. Sages Shaunaka, Markandeya, Romasha and others counsel him on the emergence of *srushti*, the relation between material and immaterial forces, contextually appropriate rituals, sacred places, etc.

sorrow—the bond that filiates one to others—due to the loss of kith and kin. His remorse is the symptom of narcissism—his indulgence in his agentive autonomy. To establish order, he cannot afford to abdicate his responsibility and valorize his agentive role in the carnage that preceded. His contextual responsibility requires him to act in the instant, but at the same time to suspend the sense of the instant's power to afford him total agentive autonomy. The narrative accounts of Shodasha Maharajas and the non-narrative counsel concerning contextual modes of being anachronically irrupt the potential narcissistic closure of Yudhishtira's indulgent remorse.

The durational-instantial complex of temporality implies an unconceptualizable and non-totalizable sense of responsibility. It is at once agentive and unagentive, contextual and context-free, unique and recurrent, etc. The multiple narrative instants braided with non-narrative aphoristic utterance offer us a work of action-responsibility or action-knowledge. Such action-knowledge dispels agentive unity. It is heterogeneous to any ipsocratic mode of being. Yudhishtara's challenge in Shantiparva is to realize this and to move beyond an ipsocentric mode of existence.

7.13 Tractions of Learning

The learning and preparation that Yudhishtira is exposed to before and after the war is mainly oriented towards a technically appropriate worldly mode of being. His sense of duration grooms his temperance and fortifies his commitment to act in accord with the virtues and ethos sanctioned for his status and stature.

All this mnemopraxial learning is action oriented, to be performed in the here and now. Yudhishtira renders all this efficaciously (although with compromises, as during Bhisma and Drona's elimination from the battlefield). He listens patiently and practices intently all the received codes of action. He learns and responds through dialogue, and all his questions seem to receive contentful responses, which reinforce his dharmic decisions. No wonder such noble praxial knowledge yields him (unlike all his brothers, cousins and wife) the most coveted fruit: a bodily entry into heaven—the abode of pure pleasure, albeit temporally regulated.

The fact that these two states of experience—*svarga* and *naraka* (if only briefly, he tastes hell, the abyss of unalloyed misery)—themselves are caught in the gyrations of time and being is borne out in the *Mahabharata*. The narrative-*itihasic* clusters of the composition would be impossible without the recursive power of machinic desire enveloping the epitomes of pleasure and pain in the forms of heaven and hell. As pointed out earlier almost all the significant figures are *amsha*s, aspects of models already in heaven or hell. Accursed or assigned, the heavenly figures descend as temporal-finite instants on the earth and are thus exposed to the whirligig of temporality.

Do you know, Bhisma asks the remorseful Yudhishtira, how many Indras disappeared? Why Indras—do the Brahmas remain after their time? Doesn't their temporal being dissolve as the instance of their existence ends? Nothing solid and

phenomenal will remain; time defeats man the way a river cuts the mountain, counsels Bhisma. Thus, he reinforces the temporal finite circulations of the gods (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, Shantiparva, 2.4, p. 670). Duration disturbs the instant and disallows its auto-immunity, to be with itself as itself. Duration anachronizes the instant. The instant of Yudhishtira's sorrow is singular but recursive; there were many precedents, though not of the same life. Yudhishtira as Yudhishtira had not existed earlier. The composition of the *Mahabharata* and its specific actors as such are unprecedented (*apurva*). No one had ever heard such a composition, suggest the sages of Naimisharanya in their desire to listen to a story.

Similarly despite claims to the contrary, no epoch of time is exclusively free from strife, desire, anger (heaven seems to be forever prone to curses), possessiveness (Indra's perennial anxiety) and other such swerves of the clinamen of passion.[22] The generative impulse reinforces itself and incorporates heaven and hell in the fold.

Throughout the composition Yudhishtira gets to learn repeatedly about the relation between desire, the body complex, the workings of temporality and the instantiations of being on the one hand, and the mnemopraxial modes of escaping the circle of desire on the other. Shaunaka (not to be confused with the chief sage in the opening frame) regales Yudhishtira about the body and its vulnerability, and the need to extricate oneself from desire (*trushna*), which is the cause of sorrow. Shaunaka imparts to him the eight different modes of cultivating the body complex and prepares him, before the war, to distance himself from its pulls and pressures. He prefigures Bhishma's counsel after the war (*Mahabharatamu*, 2000–2007, Aranyaparva: 1:19–35, pp. 8–16).

Later, Bhisma does teach Yudhishtara about time as being. He warns him that only those who learn to discern the movement and temporality of being (as time) can sense the serenity of existence; and only those with discernment of *para* in the finite body can overcome strife (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, Shantiparva, p. 673). Despite such preparation, Yudhishtara inclines towards listening to, retaining and practising rigorously only the sanctioned codes of ritual action and praxial modes of going about the world. The action knowledge that he prefers binds him more and more to the tacit and internalized obligations of doing contextually rightful action. His learning about dharma, the ways of *dana* and the means of pilgrimaging are all sanctioned codes of embodied action.

No wonder his frequent question—which is the highest or noblest dharma?—is actually related to the domain of action, whether it concerns the king's dharma (*rajadharma*), the multiple *dana*s offered ritually, the pilgrimages visited, *yaga*s rendered, or action rendered instantly (*apaddharma*). Although he is at the same time exposed to the other mnemopraxial learning that enables one to explore the possibility of release beyond ritual knowledge while caught in the instant of

[22] We are reminded often that the devastating war of the *Mahabharata* is just a varied repetition of Kruta Yuga's Deva-Danava war. Between the two are the two other catastrophes that we get to learn about: Parushurama's massacre of the kings at Shamantapanchaka 21 times at the beginning of Tretayuga and the Rama-Ravana war in Tretayuga.

existence, Yudhishtara listens to, receives and practices only his preferred action knowledge. His unwavering bonding with learning action knowledge does yield him the rich dividend of entry into heaven with the mundane, material-phenomenal body. As argued earlier, the grandeur of the fruit and the place are a quintessential part of the circle of desire.

Despite his exposure to mnemopraxial learning, after the war Yudhishtara is overpowered by remorse and gives into depression. Blinding agentive and possessive drives like remorse deflect one from the intimations of the an-agentive distancing and differential other in the body. Yudhishtara fails to escape the recursive structure by repeating the sanctioned deeds of action knowledge. No wonder the drives pursue him into the heaven too (he is distressed to see Suyodhana in heaven and disturbed to see his brothers in hell). His action knowledge keeps the circle intact.

7.14 Learning to Fail

The other great disciple-learner of the *Mahabharata* is Arjuna. He is exposed directly and without any detours to the greatest of all mnemopraxial intimations—the Bhagavad Gita. The Gita is devoid of narratives, lacking even narratemes. This entire song (*gita*) is conceived of as the fiction of *para*'s melody. In the entire Sanskrit reflective tradition *para* that inhabits the body as the latter comes into being remains inaccessible (though intimately proximate) to the perceptual-cognitive faculties and the phenomenal-praxial means of the body. The *Mahabharata* on occasions makes Krishna *play para*—as if the latter itself acted and communicated in person (which is only a reflective fiction). There can be no body without the radically other–*para*—in the body. Given the fact that *para* is everywhere in every phenomenal entity, Krishna's performative play is the *Mahabharata*'s extraordinary attempt at intimating every embodied entity like Arjuna regarding the most radical double bind within which one has to learn to act. For the body complex with its *sharira-para* composition itself is the arena of the double bind.

Given that the material-phenomenal body itself is the instantiation of durational effect, the body must cultivate its praxial faculties while sensing the intimations of the all-witnessing, uninvolved *para*. This intimate guest in the shelter of the body for ever remains indifferent and unaffected by the effects of cultivation. The aporia here appears to be that one has to act, but all action is ephemeral and vain.[23] When one fails to discern this, one undermines, forgets or ignores the in-*different para* and remains caught in the gyrational rigmarole of pleasure and pain. In the fiction of Krishna's performative play, the *Mahabharata* offers a powerful figuration of *para*'s intimation. One must learn to receive this mnemopraxial intimation and

[23] *Yad krutakam tad anityam* says the *shruti*: all activity or doing is ephemeral and finite, says the *Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad* (1989, p. 147).

respond to it within finitudinal existence. Arjuna, like Yudhishtira, listens to and devotes himself to heroic glory and the warrior ethos. Heroically, he surpasses his mighty teachers. In the process he misses the intimations of the other. He completely forgets the rare imports of *para*'s song and shamefully beseeches Krishna to repeat the song once again after the war. Krishna, now the temporal-finite being, confesses his inability to recall and perform that earlier play. Like Bhisma, he too takes recourse to narrative *itihasa* strands and tries to impart the earlier learning—but only in vain. For Arjuna once again forgets the learning. He vainly trusts his heroic valour.

He is shattered when his mighty skill and power—his most cherished and displayed qualities—abandon him and he is humiliated by the bird-catchers who attack the Yadava queens. Here it is not the question of "personal" responsibility in a time of adversity that is at stake, but the failure to cultivate the radical praxial learning of uninvolved action, a simulacrum of *para*'s mode of being in the body. This failure to learn *to let go*, while caught in the thick of it, is symptomatic of the agentive possessive mode of being.

This is precisely what Vyasa, once again for the third time, imparts to him after his humiliation at the hands of the bird-catchers. Vyasa reiterates the learning of the Gita without the narrative or *itihasic* strands on a smaller scale and grandeur. But there is no guarantee that this chosen disciple (like his brother) will cultivate the mnemopraxial learning meditatively. He too is caught by the allure of the noble virtue of the action knowledge of the warrior.

7.15 Learnt Torsions

Sages like Vyasa, Vasishta, Parashara, and Udanka are woven in the narrative web of existence differently from the warrior-learners of the *Mahabharata*. In the context of the Sanskrit *vangmaya*, Vyasa best articulates the generative impulse. No wonder he is referred to as an *amsha* of Brahma. He is the most pronounced manifestation of responsive reception, effect and medium of transformation. He transforms what he receives and regenerates it variedly.

Vyasa is the first recipient of the mnemocultural compositions of the *shruti*s, which he divides, classifies and assigns to different disciples. He is the recipient, not the creator, of these non-narrative compositions (they are not made by any man—*apaurusheya*s). Yet, he responds to what he receives by compositing new forms and disseminates them across heterogeneous constituencies. His genres of compilation and the *genos* of reception are polyvocal and multidimensional. His *purana*s and *itihasa*s are conservative, yet transgressive, responses to the mnemopraxial compositions of the *shruti vangmaya*.

While retaining in morphed forms the intimations of the secret of praxial/experiential learning, he reaches out to all those *stri*, Shudra and *dvija*s who are outside the fold of designated addressees. He multiplies the addressees and sets the learning adrift. In a word, he unleashes the generative impulse. Vyasa's

dissemination of mnemopraxial intimations releases (as Valmiki does on a smaller but comparable scale) the available narrative-*itihasic* strands without elaboration in the *shruti* compositions. Vyasa's play with these strands magnifies (*maha*) and textures the labyrinthine-acoustic passages of the *Mahabharata*. It also seduces the listeners in the multi-framed, polyvocal ensemble.

Vyasa's seminal singularity is literally captured in sustaining, through a detour, the patronymy of the Kuru genealogy. As Krishna, at the end of the great war brings to life the still-born Parikshit to sustain the Kuru-Pandava patronymy, Krishna Dvaipayana intervenes at the beginning and births the Kuru patriarchs—Dhrutarashtra and Pandu. His generative impulse proliferates in genres and genealogies.

Vyasa is not just a progenitor of tales and males but is also a keeper of time. He not only recalls and retains, but forewarns others about the future. His intermittent appearances in the *Mahabharata* are at the precise junctures where the relation between temporality and modes of being requires discernment. Satyavati calls him to sustain the future of the illustrious Kuruvamsha; he recalls to Drupada the critical *amsha*s of Draupadi; he tracks the Pandavas in the forest life and prepares them for the future; above all, he is the one who elucidates to his son Suka the relation between temporality and phenomenality. Eventually he intimates Arjuna about the necessity of cultivating praxial meditative learning. He discerns the work of duration in the instant of being or existence.

But can Vyasa exemplify the praxial learning he discerns in what he received?

Curiously, both the magnificent *Mahabharata* and the glorious *Bhagavata* that Vyasa generated do not promise such a release for Vyasa. In the *Mahabharata,* the one who imparts his learning and discernment to all the deserving cannot bear the loss of his son Suka. Suka, meanwhile, instantly grasps the praxial learning that distances him from ritual or action knowledge and immerses himself in a mode of being that proffers release. Vyasa, the uncommon disseminator of learning and lineage, cannot bear Suka's abandonment.

His filial bereavement unveils yet another anchor to his worldly existence. Shattered and distressed by the disappearance of his son, he pursues longingly the echoes Suka leaves behind. On one such pursuit he is shockingly made to realize that his concupiscent passions—without his awareness—still lurk in him. The bathing women he comes across feel ashamed as he passes by them and cover themselves, whereas they remain unperturbed when the naked Suka walked the path earlier.

The *Bhagavata* reveals yet another aspect of Vyasa. Like all the passion-filled animated figures enveloped by the furies of eros and anger in the *Mahabharata*, Vyasa is also overpowered by the distress and agony that the machinic existence exposes him to. Even after and despite his everlasting work of responsive reception and dissemination of the Sanskrit *vangmaya*, we learn that he was distraught and agonized. What pulls him down even after such learning is that he fails to gain any peace (*shanta*) in his existence. Vyasa appears disoriented and hopeless. Narada comes to his rescue and suggests a way out of this despondency.

Vyasa, like Yudhishtira in a comparable moment of distress, readily embraces the solution: as a procreator of genres and genealogies, the way out that he embraces is to compose yet another song-poem—a multi-episodic *purana* celebrating the glory of Krishna (the *Bhagavata*). Yudhishtira and Arjuna give into action knowledge and Vyasa extends and amplifies his (multi-non-) narrative impulse. In contrast Suka internalizes the learning and as a seeker and as a mnemopraxial explorer moves on in existence. Vyasa remains ultimately caught in the gyrations of the phenomenal circle. Vyasa's aporetic situation is acute and admirable. Without the transgressive generative-narrative impulse, Vyasa could not have disseminated the mnemopraxial learning across the *genos* of women, Shudras and all others on the margins of the *dvija*s. Yet, the generative passion, even as it carries the intimations of *para*, seems to overtake him. Even as he imparts his discernment to all others, in his own case the gap between learning and the immersive meditative praxis seems to remain at work. Consequently, Vyasa appears among the most agonized figures (a bit like Valmiki whose glorious *kavya* itself emerges from unbearable grief—*Shokartasya pravrutto me shloko bhavatu nanyatha*)[24] in Sanskrit *vangmaya*. This distressing moral is captured in a most moving and poignant verse attributed to Vyasa himself, beseeching god (here *para*) to forgive him for his transgressions:

> *Rupam visarjitasya bhavato dhyanena yat kalpitam*
> *Stutya anirvachaniyatakhila gurorduri krutayanmaya*
> *Vyaptitvancha nirakrutam bhagavato yattirtha vasadina*
> *Kshantavyam jagadisha tadvikalata doshatrayam matkrutam*
>
> (cited in Sarma 2010, p. 51)

> (I have created/concocted form to the one who lives discarding every form; I have praised in words the one who remains undefinable; by claiming him to live in pilgrimages I have curtailed the one who spreads across everywhere without form; forgive me Ishwara of this universe for these three wrongs.)

7.16 Limits of Reach

Vasishta, Vyasa's great grandfather, experiences similar anxieties. Linking the Kruta and Dvapara Yugas in the *Mahabharata,* Vashista's loss of his son Shakti (killed by Kalmasapada) drives him to the edge of his life. He makes several attempts to kill himself without success. Sharing his grandfather's agony, like Janamejaya, Shakti's son Parasara starts a *yaga* to eliminate all the Rakshasas to avenge his father's death. If Vasishta is pulled down by affective bonding, Parashara (who is described as free of arrogance and concupiscence, who frequented all the sacred places) succumbs not only to vengeance, but to the erotic

[24] From nowhere else but only from the nature of sorrow that my *shloka* (verse) emerged (Sreeramachandrudu 1987/2003, 1:2:18, p. 62).

pull towards Matsyagandhi. Udanka, with whom the action track of the *Mahabharata* begins and ends, resembles Parashara. He is impulsive (seduces his teacher's wife and procures her the gift of earrings), irascible and vengeful. But blinded by his powers, like Kaushika, he rushes to curse Krishna. His learning for years (till his hair turned grey) does not cultivate any temperance in him and he cannot discern the significance of signs offered to him (twice—at the beginning and at the end of the *Mahabharata* he fails to grasp the oblique appearances that offer him divine gifts). It is rather curious that the *Mahabharata* should begin and end with this kind of sage—who succumbs to the furies of passion (anger and eros)—and the silent dogs (Sarama and Sarameya).

If the thematic of vengeance permeates the passion-circles of the *Mahabharata*, Udanka epitomizes that thematic. What is all the more symptomatic of his failure to learn is that Udanka becomes vengeful *after* he is exclusively granted the rarest and the most privileged sight of Krishna in his Vishwarupa—the fiction of *para*'s performative play. He is freed of his scepticism only temporarily (like Arjuna or Yudhishtara) when he learns of *para* as the invisible and immaterial source of all phenomenality and temporality. In his very next appearance (at the beginning of the composition of the *Mahabharata*), his vengeful element overtakes him and his years of learning takes leave of him, and he provokes the massacre of the snakes.[25]

[25] Charles Malamoud (1996, pp. 156–158) reads the *Mahabharata* as a "network of tales of vengeance" wherein a "thousand different" ways the epic shows the ambition as giving meaning to action; this narrative fabric of the epic "needs no justification." Certainly the tales of vengeance multiply in the composition—but so also do the tales that dissuade one from vengeance. If there is the Bhrugu Ruru (who kills snakes) then there is Sahasrapada (who dissuades him). If there is Udanka who seeks vengeance then there is Astika who drives the sense of serenity into Janamejaya. If there is Parashara devoted to eliminate all Rakshasas then there is Atri who stops him and so on. What is important to recognize here is that there is certainly the ambition of vengeance, the passion for retaliation, a mode of keeping a certain memory alive, a reiteration of what preceded with a variation. But at the same time there is the counter flow that disrupts, staggers and turns such memory discontinuous. The *Mahabharata* weaves its composition (as in the case of the *Panchatantra* we discussed earlier) with these contrapuntal voices. In the coils of the *Mahabharata* the efficacious utterances such as curse as well as impulsive action of revenge both reinforce a structure of repetition. Yet the composition also enframes all such motifs that contribute to repetition compulsion; through various modes it also reiterates the need to learn to find a passageway beyond such circles of gyration. This later mode—addressed to the praxial-seeker, beyond narrative, episodic accounts of the composition aims at enabling and preparing the addressee to cultivate release from the binds of the machinic structure of existence. In such a context to represent the *Mahabharata* only as a repertory of tales of vengeance is to reduce it to what the composition in fact warns against. To be sure, Malamoud does recognize that vengeance as such has no place or only an intermediary role in the context of dharma. It has neither any value nor an "institutional space, not even a socially regulated practice". One does not even find an equivalent term for vengeance in the Sanskrit language, contends Malamoud. Then how does Malamoud justify his emphasis on vengeance in the *Mahabharata*? Without examining this foregrounded thematic in the larger context of the *Mahabharata,* Malamoud claims that the Brahminic India's obsession with violence blocked the tradition from "transforming it [violence] into a clearly circumscribed social practice" (1996, p. 168). Malamoud characteristically imports here the Judaeo-Christian theological-political-juridical ("vengeance is mine") paradigm where the secular political state inherits the right to violence from its theological sources of governance.

By placing the Udanka narrative at the "beginning" and at the "end" of the *Mahabharata*, the composition indicates how the furies of passion on the one hand, and the weight of nescience (*avidya*) on the other, bind one to the machinic gyration. With Udanka the *Mahabharata* exposes us to the seductions of the narrative *itihasa* pulls, and the consequent forgetting of *para*'s intimations, from within the composition and the body complex in each of its singular existences. It reflects in a gyrating spiral each one's response to the chance of temporal being. In short, the Udanka figure emblematizes the question of how one orients one's *vrutti,* the embodied mode of being in an aporetic instantial-durational complex.

Thus, the *Mahabharata* provides us at least four modes of articulating the temporal phenomenal instantiation of being. If the celebrated mode of action knowledge, learning and rendering the contextually sanctioned codes of action, is the mode exemplified by Yudhishtira and Arjuna, Duryodhana (who was once a Suyodhana) invests precisely such assigned and received codes and cultivates his deflective learning. The most elaborate and labyrinthine *itihasic* rendering of mnemopraxial learning in the case of Yudhishtara manifests as a displaced repetition in the case of Duryodhana. In other words, *pravrutti* (action knowledge) and *durvrutti* (evil action) are actually varied repetitions of the same mode of being—rendering the sanctioned authentically or articulating the endowed vengefully. Therefore, both these modes and their individuated articulations reinforce the circle of desire.

7.17 Beyond Tragic Imports

The *Mahabharata* poignantly and disturbingly shows and sings the fact that none of the Kurus and Brahmins, Yadavas and Vrishnis who are caught variously in the coils of the *Mahabharata* succeeds in discerning the need to move beyond action knowledge and cultivate the praxial meditative learning of release in existence. They remain bonded to the gyrations of action, in the dualism of pleasure and misery, heaven and hell. Yet, they are all exposed to the mnemopraxial learning and are all endowed with the instantial/finite chance of existence.

What all those caught in the relentless circle eventually do with what they have cannot be reckoned as tragic, for the latter has no epistemic place in the reflective, creative reckoning of the Sanskrit tradition. Tragedy is legible and intelligible only in an episteme where a transcendental normative power determines and regulates modes of being. In such an epistemic frame tragedy is regarded as a primal defiance of the authority and a nascent affirmation of self. Tragedy is treated as an agonistic human struggle to gain equality with the gods, as a decisive move from

(Footnote 25 continued)
Such a contrast with a normative model merely points to a lack in the Indic tradition—lack of politico-juridical, "secular" order of governance or institution.

myth to history, from religion to secularity. Tragedy, in these reckonings, is also a critical transition from the unconscious literary epic poetic reflective mode to a rigorous conscious cognitive mode of philosophy. Socrates and his mode of argumentation (dialogue with a decisive *Socratic* orientation) are configured as the "irrevocable epitome" and "ineluctable consequence" of tragedy (where Socrates himself figures as the sacrificial hero-victim) (Walter Benjamin, quoted in Weber 2004, pp. 160–180; also see Weber 2008, pp. 144–156).[26]

Indian Sanskritic traditions do not conform to European schema regarding polytheistic cultures. For every god here who is accorded a name (*nama*) and has a form (*rupa*) is always already exposed to the phenomenal-temporal structure of existence; no such god can escape the force of the generative impulse (they too are in fact its effects). Even the gods—as they too take the phenomenal form, made of *guna*s[27]—are exposed to the relentless recursive gyrations of appearance and disappearance; their lives are not free from strife and their abodes are constantly passages for all mortals.

In contrast to such phenomenal temporal entities, when conceived as a singular force (as in the Upanishads) *para* is intangible, non-phenomenal but pervasive, essentially unconfigurable and unperceivable but inside-outside of the phenomenal confines. Without the clinamen of inarticulable elements, *para* cannot hope to come into any phenomenal temporal entity. In other words, *para*—without regard to the formation of entities—has no sovereign agentive status, nor does it generate the clinamen of elements. *Para* can also split itself into or morph itself into, differ from itself into another—and find itself sheltered in its effect as the phenomenal entity. Neither passive nor entirely agentive, neither possessive nor unpossessing, *para* persists in the finite and the phenomenal without any drive to command and control.

As a silent, secretive witness that inhabits the phenomenal entities, *para* is exposed to the *vrutti* of beings that proliferate. Free of coercive power and without any mechanism of attraction, *para* can always be forgotten or ignored. Paradoxically, such ignoring endangers the phenomenal entity, the body itself. Forgetting the other that inhabits it condemns the phenomenal temporal entity to a machinic repetition. Such an origin-less and interminable (as long as phenomenal entities come forth) recursive relation between *para* and the body impels instantial beings to reflect upon the facticity of existence.

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[26] Similarly, throughout in his work Jean-Pierre Vernant (Vernant and Vidal-Naguet 1990, pp. 49–84, 237–248) emphasizes tragedy as an intermediate genre between myth (epic and lyric) and philosophy with humanist, secularizing orientation. The tragic hero, emerging from a divine order, in attempting to "decide" and "choose" for himself, individuates himself from that older order: tragedy contains "intimations of the will". Cf. also, Williams (1993, pp. 16–20).

[27] Among the Angirasas, *sattva* (temperance) becomes prominent while the other two *guna*s are unemphasized; among the Adityas *rajoguna* (passion) is prominent and the others are subordinate; similarly, if among the Maruttas prevails a mixture of *rajo* and *tamo* (darkness) *guna*s, among the Ashvins *tamo guna* dominates (Sarma 2001, p. ix).

In this reckoning of machinic living, the life that forgets, ignores or fails to sense the "weak force" of *para* and fails to learn to live with the other in the singular entity is in fact death. Such dangerous forgetting reduces the entity to the repetitive compulsive pull of desire, which is nothing but death, says Vidura's teacher Sanatsujata to the blind king Dhrutarashtra. Dhrutarashtra desires to remain blind even when Krishna offers him vision. He prefers rather to listen about the catastrophic events (and even the Gita from Sanjaya)—which unfold due to his indulgence in compulsive desire. His listening, like that of others, does not deflect him from his indulgence, his *moha*. He chooses to terminate his life through the sanctioned mode of dwelling in the forest—and gets consumed by the wild fire. "*Ko mohah ka dukha*", says the *shruti*. Wherever there is the indulgence of desire there is sorrow. The sorrow resulting from mortality, bereavement or death is fundamentally only a derivative effect of this originary sorrow of desire's indulgence. For the originary sorrow mediates and effects phenomenal existences.

As argued earlier, the emergence of beings is the result of desire which, through the medium of the phenomenal being, propagates itself and beings. The termination of this being certainly erupts pain and sorrow, but these remain derivative of the durational recursive working of desire itself. The originary sorrow comes with the machine of dualities of pleasure and misery with which the phenomenal entity is inextricably bonded. The originary sorrow sets in wherever one, driven by the agentive and possessive drives, reduces the being to the physical object and ignores or forgets *para* inhabiting it. As a result, when such a controllable and possessable object disappears, the pain and sorrow appear unbearable.

The *Mahabharata* graphically captures the agony of such devastating sorrow in its circles. Arjuna succumbs to it at the beginning of the war; Yudhishtara gives into it at the end. Multiple narrative-*itihasa*s are instantiated to assuage Yudhishtara's sorrow; the Streeparva reverberates with the wailing of the bereaved Kaurava queens. Yet the *Mahabharata* in all these weavings persistently attempts to reorient its addressees (Arjuna, Yudhishtara, Duryodhana and Dhrutarastra) from derivative sorrow and the reductive sense of being to sense the other, deeper originary source of *dukha: moha* and the ipseity ("I -ness") that it spawns. Each of the recipients of this mnemopraxial learning that fails in different ways bears the consequences of such forgetting and remains caught in the gyrations of desire.

The task of living as praxial inquiry requires one to discern that the very chance of coming into being gives us a decisive opportunity (without guarantees) to learn. It gives us a chance to discern that both friend and foe, the witness and doer of necessary and vicious acts, resides in the body complex that we are endowed with:

> *Atmai vahyatmano bandhu ratmai va ripuratmanah*
> *Atmai vahyatmanassakshi krutasyapakrutasya cha*
>
> (quoted in Rao 2006, p. 344)

What one does with this singular-plural being as one lives with others is the indeterminable chance one is gifted or cursed with. Therefore, we lend ourselves in accord with the way we cultivate our endowments, the *Mahabharata* suggests.

7.18 Serenity of Being and Temporality of Chance

The derivative sense of sorrow or grief, irrespective of its magnitude, when untouched by the deeper current of the duality of *dukha* and *sukha,* cannot be reckoned as tragic: for the termination of an empirical life leads to no passageway beyond the recursive rigmarole. However heroic Abhimanyu's singular fight might have been, it can, at the most, take him to the sanctioned abode of ephemeral rest. Such is the destiny of all heroic valour that leads to the false exits of pleasure and misery.

As gods too are caught in the gyrations of desire (the gods lack continence [*dama*] and they know it, says the Upanishad)[28] and transitory abodes, the hero's death does not subvert any reified mythical order. As the successes and failures of the narrativized royal genealogies are essentially varied repetitions of *sukha* and *dukha*, and as everybody meets the destiny of termination, royal valour does not signify any defiance. The reflective traditions here do not privilege any agonism. Nahusha, Bali and Prahlada certainly threaten and even deprive Indra of his place. But such battles are only storms in the constricted arena created by the circle of desire. No one (not even Yama can escape that, says the *Kathopanishad*)[29] provides a passageway out. The hero's death cannot valorize the tragic as an emancipatory alternative to the alleged mythical polytheistic order; there is nothing "heroic" (in the usual sense) in mnemopraxial learning. For the latter essentially requires a non-coercive sensing of *para* within finitudinal existence. Through praxial learning of the other within and without the being, everybody is endowed with the possibility of release from the dualities of pleasure and sorrow. The very event of coming into being underwrites the possibility of such a release within finitudinal existence.

The implied addressee—the *sadhaka*—of Sanskrit reflective traditions is exposed to the mnemopraxial learning and offered the opportunity to cultivate a mode of being attuned to release. It is entirely up to the seeker what he or she does with the chance of existence that the instant offers. It is always possible to appropriate *para* into the fold of the gods and idolize it in a temple, to configure it with the material phenomenal name and form and surround it with action knowledge or ritual binds. Yet, *para* cannot be entrapped by these externalized modes of being. For, *para* is a non-commanding, weak force which can only

[28] The *Bruhadaranyaka* refers to the three ways in which the three children of Prajapati understood his *upadesha* through the word *da*. The Suras heard it as "*damyata* or *dama*" which suggests what they needed to learn. Given their indulgence in concupiscent desire, the *upadesha* here requires them to have continence. The Asuras hear *dvayadhvam*—which implies, given violent rage, they need to practise kindness and generosity. Finally, the humans hear *datta*—which implies, given their greed, they need to cultivate hospitality. Cf. *Bruhadaranyaka*, Vol. 2 (1989, pp. 13–17).

[29] The *Kathopanishad* offers a *samvada* between Nachiketa and Yama concerning the mode of knowing *para*. Yama tries to dissuade Nachiketa in multiple ways through other-worldly temptations. As the former persists in his quest, Yama confesses that he too got stuck within the gyrating world of *svarga-naraka* (heaven-hell) and hasn't been able to move beyond that. Cf. *Kathopanishad* (2001, 1.2, pp. 140–45).

circulate as a mute witness, a silent, non-aggressive but vigilant intimation. Ignoring such powerless alterity requires no heroism, and the world of beings is replete with reiterations of such nescience.

The conservative and transgressive composition of the *Mahabharata* opens up the imports of the Sanskrit reflective tradition to everyone. The narrative-*itihasic* cluster and the non-narrative strands carry forward the disseminative process. It suggests the possibility of configuring an inquirer in/with everybody, and of communicating the non-narrative melodic intimations to everyone in the hope that, after attentive reception and focused recall, every inquirer would experientially attune to the intimations of *para* in the body. Although such a call of mnemopraxial learning is always resonant, Vyasa is (characteristically) agonized by the fact that none of his own beloved grandsons would cultivate such learning despite his magnificent song. He throws up his hands in the air and exclaims in pain:

> *Urdhva bahurviraumyesha na cha kashchi shrunoti mam*
> *Dharmadarthashcha kamashcha sa kimartham nasevyate*
> (*Sriman Mahabharatam* 2001, p. xiv)

> (I bemoan with my hands on my head. No one listens to my word: Only with dharma that the other erotic and economic ends of man can be achieved.)[30]

All the chosen disciples of the *Mahabharata* are indeed exposed to this learning, but they listen selectively. Seduced by the narratives they seem to receive but ignore or forget the intimations of the non-narrative strand. None of those entrapped in the *akhyanaka* (narrative) sirens of the *Mahabharata* is drawn towards the intimated release. It is precisely such failed intimation that Anandavardhana points out as the ultimate import of the *Mahabharata* in his unusual (among Lakshanikas) but pregnant gloss. In his reckoning, the ultimate sense of touch that the *Mahabharata* evokes is that of serenity, tranquillity or a profound peace in the mode of being.

The compositional pulls of the narrative and the non-narrative clusters and strands are seen by commentators on the *Mahabharata* as poetic and reflective forces of the work. If the narrative favours the poetic body, the non-narrative forms the *shastric* body, argue some critics. But nowhere does one claim that the poetic and reflective, narrative and non-narrative are in contradictory relation. If the poetic was permeated by the mnemocultural *shruti vangmaya*, the reflective nurtures the poetic orientation in it. *Prayoga* and *viniyoga* are not opposed modes of going about in the world.

Brought up in the inter-animating creative-reflective traditions of Sanskrit *vangmaya*, Anandavardhana characterizes the *Mahabharata* as a reflective-episodic work developed in the shade of a poetic creation.[31] If the Sanskrit

[30] Lest it should go unnoticed, let's point out that Vyasa includes only three of the four ends of man. The fourth one—*moksha*—is conspicuous by its absence (as in the case of the characters/*amsha* in the *Mahabharata*).

[31] "*Mahabharatepi shastrarupakavyacha chayanukarini*" (*Mahabharata* too [like the *Ramayana*] is a reflective form composed in poetic shade). Cf. Anandavardhana (1998, Chap. 4, p. 961).

Mahabharata appeared to incline more towards the reflective, the Telugu responsive rendering of it is claimed to enhance its poetic-creative resources. The Telugu rendering of the *Mahabharata* transformed the Sanskrit one into a poetic creation emerging in the shade of Sanskrit reflective traditions.[32] Similarly one can argue that the myriad appropriations of the *Mahabharata* among heterogeneous *genos* of mnemocultures render it into incomparable performative enactments and visual spectacles—in a word unforeseen genres.

As we know, however, none of the addressees within the contours of the *Mahabharata* (including Vyasa himself), despite the composition's persistent attempt to evoke sense or serenity (*shanta*), is open to responsive reception of such sense. Everyone deflects from their path and in their own ways continues to nurture the web of desire in their instantiation. *Then who is the addressee of these non-invasive intimations of mnemopraxial learning?* Can such an addressee, for both Vyasa and Anandavardhana, be a very different figure? Such a figure, discerning the recursive duration in the instant of existence, vigilantly withdraws from temporary abodes (like Mudgala) and seeks to nurture delight (*ananda*) beyond the dualities of pleasure and misery. Anandavardhana identifies such a sense of serenity as a desire-free state, a delight sans the power of compulsive passion (*trushna kshaya sthiti*). Vyasa unfolds such a state as the experience of *mumukshu*—the one who delights in release, who *lets go* of the binds and bonds that entrap.

The praxial seeker cannot be exemplified, and his/her mode of being remains marginal and unimposing (as in the case of uneventful narratemes about Mudgala, Saktuprasthu and the woman Sabala whom Janaka encounters) within the devastating accounts of the Kurus; *there is nothing heroic about them.* Although in his transgressive move Vyasa makes the addressee (who is the praxial seeker) indefinite, his "failure" to exemplify such a learner (a *viniyogi*) makes the efficacy of the narrative-*itihasic* weavings suspect.

Can exemplifications, life writings, and passion flows, verbal seductions, like the temptations of the idol or image—all the material-temporal means of manipulation—equal the very destiny of mnemopraxial being? Is it by accident that the Sanskrit mnemocultures for almost two millennia eschewed narrative elaborations and have not given into the seductions of persuasive and identificatory tracts? Shouldn't the absence of some singularly celebrated life accounts of such a *mumukshu* in the tradition raise question about the epistemic status of narrative in mnemopraxial learning? Why are the Upanishadic compositions, which configure the imports of mnemopraxial learning—the most critical chronotope of *prayoga* and *viniyoga*—silent about exemplars? Why, in his unusual move to offer a gloss on the *Mahabharata*, like all the reflective literary inquirers before and after him, does Anandavardhana offer no narrative summa of the *Mahabharata*? Why are there no accounts of plots and elaborations of poetic thematic in the literary

[32] Consequently, the *shantarasa* attributed to the Sanskrit Mahabharata is argued to be inapplicable to the Telugu rendering where the heroic (*vira*) flavour/mood gains emphasis. Cf. *Mahabharatamu*, "Preface", Ashwamedha, Mausala (2000–2007, p. 35).

inquiries (from Bharata to Jagannatha and beyond) of the Sanskrit traditions? Why is it that they don't count on the narrative? Who counts (on) the *(up)akhyan(ak)as*?

It might be that such inquiries point to a profoundly different orientation of Sanskrit reflective-creative traditions and their praxially and experientially deep difference with and distance from European reflective and creative traditions (tragedy, philosophy, literary criticism, etc.). Such inquiries might provide a lever to reorient (beyond the Orientalist-Indological highway) our passageways to our pasts, rustling in our destitute postcolonial contemporaneity. Such inquiries might open up our critical humanities beyond the threatening confines of nation and territory (the passions of agency and possession). The *Mahabharata* opens an interminable passageway to all such inquiries.

In our search for affirmative passageways to Indian pasts through mnemocultural formations, we have explored reflective creative patterns that stand out in contrast to the epistemic frames institutionalized in colonial modernity. These patterns can only with force be made to fit into such frames. The kind of questioning such reading or interpretive frames imposed on these formations discloses the theo-cultural background of the frameworks of reading. So far we have been able to discern epistemically distinguishing features such as: sonic-resonance (in contrast to inscriptional-objects), musical-melodic compositional forms (in contrast to discursive-conceptual structures), embodied and enacted modes (in contrast to exteriorized archivations), situationally deployed but context-transcendent non-narrative aphoristic utterances (differing from narrative consolidations), a-lithic and a-graphic (in contrast to lithic and plastic) forms, reflective-responsive receptions and literary inquiries (in contrast to meta-level critical philosophical positions). Such reflective creative patterns of compositions enable us to configure cultural difference and cultural singularity.

Another crucial feature that is conspicuous in these reflective formations is the significant indifference to yet another institutionalized activity called translation. As in the case of plastic figures, here too we notice that the Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions for nearly two millennia evinced systemic reticence towards this patently *trans-substantial* activity called translation. Chapter 8 explores the paradoxical status of translation in the context of Sanskrit traditions. The paradox can be formulated in a simple aphorism: *Sanskrit does not translate but lends itself to translation*; *Sanskrit is indifferent to the foreign but persistently plays the foreign*. We shall unpack these figural condensations in Chap. 8.

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Chapter 8
Responsive Receptions: The Question of Translation Beyond the Accursed Zone

Abstract Cultures that embody and perform their memories rather than store them in disembodied external systems (archives) seem to remain indifferent to the activity of translation. For millennia Sanskrit, though circulating in a polyglot milieu, remained indifferent to translation and to the "foreign". But the entire theoretical discussion on translation is entrenched in the Judaeo-Christian framework and thus remains impervious to the experience of Sanskrit. While exploring the interface between Sanskrit and Telugu as an act of responsive reception, this chapter critiques the dominant conception of translation.

Keywords Translation · Sanskrit · Babel · Rajasekhara · Nannaya · Benjamin

> [The] central disaster for any possibility of true communication between different cultures is the 'critical' turn in modern philosophy. In the wake of this turn, the model intellectual is an incredulous debunker, an observer far too clever to be duped by any particular belief about much of anything.
>
> Harman (2005, p. 167)

8.1 In Different Transferrals

In our attempt to track the implications of the lithic turn, and its pronounced absence for millennia in mnemocultures, we have so far examined the categories of writing, narrative and icon in the Indian (Sanskrit) reflective traditions. There is yet another domain which is in symbiotic relation with this lithic grid and it is translation. Sanskrit mnemocultures affirm pronounced indifference in practice to this domain as well. The striking absence of epistemic categories such as "translation", "comparison" and "criticism" in the Indian (Sanskrit) reflective traditions and their pervasive (invasive) presence and hegemonic global spread from the European 19th century call for a serious inquiry. This chapter is devoted

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to inquire into the differential orientations of the accursed zone of translation and the cultures of *responsive reception*.

India's literary and reflective traditions offer an immense paradox. On the one hand a resolute sense of indifference toward translation or even translatability reigns in these traditions. Sanskrit reflective traditions have turned away from the practice of translation for millennia, let alone theorizing it. Unlike in Latin where a *translatio studie* took place, "there exists no Sanskrit or other discourse on translation; in fact there exists no common word for translation in any premodern Indic language" (Pollock 1996, p. 114). Yet, on the other hand, there is a pervasive impulse to respond to the received verbal compositions (of Sanskrit) across all the major Indian languages. Almost all the Indian languages reinforce this impulse and the fecundity of these languages is enhanced by this irresistible impulse.

Radical indifference to translation and extensive practice of responding to the received, affirming translatability and untranslatability, structure these traditions. But these contrapuntal forces have not received any significant reflection in the context of these traditions. There is no equivalent in Sanskrit or Telugu to the Latin *transfere* (to transport, to move from one place to another). Similarly, the German word for translation is *übersetzen*—metaphor—that which works on analogical relation between two objects (de Man 1986, p. 83), has no comparable term and practice in Indian languages. What is the epistemic space of translation, as such and in general, in Indic mnemocultures?

Sanskrit traditions, to a very large extent, neither lend themselves to nor indulge the "foreign"—at least for nearly two millennia. Curiously, it is literally the "foreigners" around the beginning of the Common Era, who frayed the passages for "translation". Here again what lent itself to translation (as it did to literacy) was the reflective tradition of Buddhism. In contrast, the Sanskrit (Vedic) reflective traditions largely remained indifferent to the dynamic of the "foreign". No wonder Sheldon Pollock's grand narrative of the "language of the Gods" (1996) and the drift of poetic genres across Asia from the beginning of the Common Era has nothing to say about the work of translation in this dissemination of Sanskrit; whereas Buddhism in its various denominations travels across Asia and beyond in translation.

The incidence of foreign languages (Persian, Tibetan, Chinese, Arabic, etc.) opening up and appropriating Pali-Sanskrit has no parallel to Sanskrit's reception of the foreign. In other words, to put it negatively but quickly, Sanskrit by and large appears to have remained self-enclosed and "ethnocentric".[1] Yet, Sanskrit remained increasingly sensitive to its existence in a multilingual milieu across millennia. Sanskrit works from Panini to the Lakshanikas demonstrate the awareness of the heteroglot world of Prakrit (Apabhramsa), Paishachi, Yavana (for both Greek/Roman and Persian/Arabic) and other *deshi* domains of language.

[1] This epithet is misleading here for Sanskrit has not developed any sense of a unified ethne as such; but it is used here to suggest how an outsider might perceive Sanskrit.

Yet, Sanskrit moved itself in this heteroglot milieu as a "refined", reflective and creative idiom (more than less) autonomously.

The 10th century poet-thinker, Rajasekhara, gives a graphic account of the placement of poets of different languages in a royal court. On the northern side of the (unnamed) king are placed the Sanskrit poets and following them the learned of the Vedas and the ancillary disciplines are seated. To the east of the king are the Prakrit poets and after them actors, dancers, singers, players of musical instruments, storytellers (*vagjivanas*—those who live by the utterance), Kusheelavas (performers/bards) and other such are seated. On the western side the Apabhramsha poets, and next to them portraitists, sculptors, jewellers, gem testers, goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, and others are placed. On the southern side are poets of Paishachi languages (*bhutabhasha* poets), pimps, courtesans, rope dancers, snake charmers, mesmerizers, wrestlers, and other such people. It must be noticed that each of these four squares has first a language and poet community (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 150–151). Needless to point out that there is no space or square for translators here.

Throughout his work, Rajasekhara refers to the multi-*jati* milieu informing the poet. In his view certain themes can be evoked more effectively in Sanskrit, but for certain others Prakrit is appropriate; for putting forth some other, Apabhramsa is more convenient; even Paishachi is well-suited for certain other matters. The poet who has competence and sense of appropriateness of different languages—his fame will cover the universe, proclaims Rajasekhara (2003, p. 135).[2] Rajasekhara in fact insists that the poet must not only know as many languages as s/he (Rajasekhara affirms that women can also compose *kavya*s) can, but also must be well versed in *kavya*s of these languages (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 146–147).[3] Emphasizing the musicality of the poetic composition, Rajasekhara states that the sweetness of tonal rendering is the result of transgenerational learning and practice. The entire Chap. 7 of *Kavyamimamsa* is devoted to reinforcing the vocalic significance of poetic composition in different languages.

Long before the Common Era, the heteroglot Indic traditions wove internally varied reflective and creative compositions for over millennia. These compositions sustained and extended the singularity of Sanskrit for millennia. Yet, across the immense spread of heteroglot *vangmaya*, Sanskrit barely appears inclined towards the work of translation. None of the Smrutikaras, *darshanika*s, *shastrakara*s (may be with very rare exceptions) and Lakshanikas have ever recognized or

[2] Rajasekhara goes on to even identify regions where these languages excel (Gauda for Sanskrit, Lata and Maru [Gujarat-Rajasthan] for Prakrit; Takka-Buddhaka (found between Vipasha and Siddha rivers, Marwad, East Punjab, Sialkot) for Apabhramsha; Avanti, Pariyatra, Dashapura for Paishacha). Middle country people are competent in all the languages.

[3] Rajasekhara, it must be pointed out, is more inclined towards Prakrit than Sanskrit. He contends that Sanskrit emerged from Prakrit. The differences between these languages are, for him, like the differences between man (Sanskrit) and woman (Prakrit); for the former is more coarse and jarring and the latter delicate and sweet. Cf., Sreeramachandrudu, "Preface" to *Kavyamimamsa* (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. ix–xi).

acknowledged the activity of translation. *They seem to have had no use for it*. Translation in its paradigmatic Latinate form either as a transaction between two languages or as a transmission of received content across languages has barely tempted Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions.

8.2 Dispersing Otherwise

If translation is one of the two (the other being criticism) crucial modes for continuing the life of a work, then certain Sanskrit traditions can hardly be said to recognize such a mode to sustain or enhance the life of the "foreign". Sanskrit does not undertake to render any foreign language into its idiom for millennia, whereas cultural formations that drive themselves towards objectifying inscriptional technologies have devised and consolidated categories of translation, comparison and criticism. Even a cursory glance at the historical milestones of a linear trajectory in the lithic intellectual heritage, translation—as content transmission between two determined nodes—repeatedly surfaces with significance. The Rosetta Stone, the Akkadian, Sumerian lists[4]; the Persian epoch; Greek into Latin, Greek, Latin into Arabic[5]; Arabic/Latin into German, French, and English;

[4] "Translation in the Near East had been going on ever since the second millennium BC and the translation of Sumerian documents into Akkadian" (Gutas 1998, p. 20).

[5] One can roughly sketch at least four pivotal "translation movements" from the beginning of the Common Era. The Latin/Roman translation and appropriation of Greek culture, as a kind of military exercise, said to have initiated a model of translation. Such appropriation has been described as the "victor's prerogative" (St. Jerome's phrase), of incorporating the foreign into the language of the triumphant: "this involves the pursuit, capture, and reduction of the foreigner's meaning or ideas." The triumphalist model of translation has repeated itself throughout European imperial expeditions (Spanish, Portuguese, British, French and in a different way German) into the 20th century (Claro 2009, pp. 108–111). Given that the Roman appropriation of Greek culture was devoid of any access to the originary experience of that culture, the triumphalism had no base to celebrate. "The groundlessness of Western thought begins with this translation", contends Heidegger (quoted in Sallis 2002, p. 17). Such a model might have begun with the destructive expeditions of Alexander. Alexander is said to have pillaged the Persian archival repositories, got their works translated into Byzantine Greek and Coptic and finally condemned them to destruction. One can track the second translation movement precisely as a Persian reaction to Alexander's destruction. The resurgent Persia, claiming the glory of Achaemenid Empire, sought to retrace and reclaim all extant knowledge of the world as a creation of Zoroaster. The extended translation activities of Chusroes Anushirvan in the Common Era open up another epoch of translation. Persian, Tibetan, Chinese, Buddhist translational expeditions can be tracked on the Silk Route of this epoch. Within a century after the end of Sassanid Empire, one could see the efflorescence of Abbasid translational movement. The Abbasid Caliphs were drawing on and extending the Sassanid ideals of reclaiming Persian knowledges—this time into Arabic (via Persian, Greek and Syriac). This third movement opens up a vibrant network of radical intellectual inquiries. The legacy of this movement can be traced to the end of the Mughal era in India—where Akbar's, Dara Shikoh's and Sawai Jai Singh's (18th century Rajasthan) translational endeavours flourished. The fourth one, of course, returns one to the Roman model

the non-European language into European ones: translation as a transaction with the foreign is an essential part of lithic prosthetic cultural formations.

German Romanticism, in its founding moment of conceptualizing translation, identifies criticism as another mode of continuing the life of a work. The German Romantics (the *Athenaum* group, in particular) considered translation as the most central activity of poetry. *Dictung* and *übersetzung* (poetry and translation) are in deep proximity. Translation, understanding and criticism are seen as constitutive of poetry: "In the final analysis, all poetry is translation", declares Novalis (as cited in Berman 1992, p. 14). Here the critic-poet-translator sees himself as the most "versatile" figure spreading himself across different domains of knowledge and understanding. As an encyclopaedic figure, the critic-poet-translator moves across domains such as language (Greek, Latin, Italian, French and English), literatures, and the sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics, history) (Berman 1992, p. 14). Following this tradition, Walter Benjamin sees translation as akin to philosophy as critical epistemology, literary theory and history. Translation is like critical philosophy, for the latter critiques the imitative concept of the world and the truth claims of perceptualism. Similarly, translation is decanonization and disarticulation of the original for Benjamin. As criticism rearticulates non-imitatively, so does translation. Translation is akin to historical work because translation is not an imitation of some natural process of the original, and not a derivation. The original will have to be understood from the perspective of translation (de Man 1986, p. 83).

Criticism and translation are seen as two sides of the same activity in German Romanticism. This critical translational activity is at the service of supplementing, realizing and extending the significance of the original work. The "original" or foreign seems to require the supplemental augmentation from the translational-critical act for it to live on. The translated (that is, the foreign or "original") also permeates and fecundates the translating language. That is, the foreign or the original in the process of being translated deeply marks and enables the receiving language to enhance and augment itself in unforeseen ways.

(Footnote 5 continued)
of "victor's prerogative"—when the reappropriation of Greek knowledges extends on a large scale and turns itself into a movement—the Renaissance. The dominant concept of translation (sublating the sense, spirit, and essence over the chaff, the body, the literal signifier—a deeply Christian concept) consolidates itself from this fourth epoch of translation movement. For Sassanid and Abbasid movements, cf. Gutas (1998, pp. 28–60) and Saliba (2007, pp. 1–72), for Arabic translations and their impact on the Renaissance; for the Mughal work, cf. Ali (1999, pp. 171–180). Here it must be noted that in the Mughal period we are referring to a phenomenon of Sanskrit lending itself to translation. The only exception to this phenomenon is the translations *into* Sanskrit in the field of astrology. Cf. Sarma (1998, pp. 67–87). Despite their internal differences, it must be emphasized here that, all these "movements" are fundamentally contingent upon their primary bonding with mnemotechnologies, their lithic turn and their scribal investment. The epistemophilic urge ("archive fever") haunted these cultures.

In sharp contrast to German Romantic thought, Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions limit the universality of such modes of living on.[6] Despite the historical fact that different languages and heterogeneous communities (*jati*s) that proliferated over millennia in the subcontinent—we hardly notice any transferential or meta-positional objectifying practices in the Sanskrit traditions for considerably long periods. In short, they lived on outside the lithic circuitry, even when they were exposed to it.

Conception of a work as a discrete pre-existing entity to be acted upon has no place in the composition of Lakshanikas. For no Lakshanika ever tries to supplement any previous work with either the mode of critical-historical analysis or creates a translational opening for the foreign. No Lakshanika in principle translates the Prakrit passages they cite in their compositions. When they refer to any other's work they do so only through contextually relevant citations. Most of the time such citations manifest in the form of a single verse; but such citations do not invoke the context of their natal existence, that is, their "original" location. In other words, they practice citations without references. The context of the receiving composition identifies and incorporates into itself the extracted verse passage fragment.

It must, however, be pointed out that the work of translation as a transaction between languages has not completely escaped the Lakshanikas. In fact a rare instance of "translation" of a Prakrit verse into Sanskrit does occur in Rajasekhara's *Kavyamimamsa*. He comes closest to even naming this translational activity among languages. But this *prayoga* is undertaken in a context that brackets such acts as undesirable and lowly.

Rajasekhara declares that there is no poet, like a trader, who does not steal. Stealing per se itself is not a culpable deed. Those who are inept at stealing and who are incapable of transforming the stolen with their poetic competence are culpable in accord with their quantum of stealing (a word, a sentence, a compositional motif, or a line, etc.). While differentiating five different types of poets—based on their ability and modes of appropriation of others' poetry, Rajasekhara goes on to show that the first four poets indulge reflective-imitative appropriation. Rajasekhara gives a detailed account of eight different types of such imitations. He identifies one specific type of imitation among them as *natanepathyam* (scene (of) behind action):

[6] It must, however, be stated clearly that the juxtaposition of Sanskrit and German Romanticism is not a comparison of two national cultures. Despite ill-thought conflations of Sanskrit and the Indian nation, the former, in its entire historical existence (before colonial modernity) never produced any notion akin to nation or national community. If German Romanticism forged a conceptual apparatus to project a theory of art (work and/as criticism), if it rearticulated the age-old agonism between art and philosophy and institutionalized it, Sanskrit traditions moved on a-conceptually, non-institutionally and, as shown in Chap. 4 earlier, the war between poetry and philosophy makes no sense in these traditions. The discursive and institutional structures within which we function (and bring forth this kind of work) are a legacy of the conceptual ventures of German Romanticism (or German ideology). The juxtaposition here is more to accentuate the contrast, or *differentia specifica*, of the Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions.

Anyatama bhashanibaddham bhashantarena parivartyata iti nata nepathyam
(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 184)

([When] What is bound in one language is transformed into another language [it] is called the scene behind action)

Rajasekhara renders a verse from Prakrit into Sanskrit here; but he does not identify this act as translation (though the word *bhashantarena* refers to interlingual activity); nor does he give the act any recognizable generic status. That is, translation here is not seen as a legitimate, necessary or inevitable activity. On the contrary, here it is seen as just one mode of appropriating the existing *shabda*s. After rendering the Prakrit verse into Sanskrit, Rajasekhara gives yet another instance of composing another poem altogether which differs from the original Prakrit verse. That is, here we notice the coming forth of a new poem provoked or invoked by another poem in a different language. In other words, what gains recognition is not the imitation of what already exists in a different language, but receiving the existing as a provocation for generating an altogether a new work. This can be seen as one of the crucial clues to the extensive rendering of Sanskrit *kavya*s and *purana*s into *bhasha* languages by the vernacular poets in the second millennium (we shall return to this theme).

As can be seen Rajasekhara puts the potential activity of translation into the category of imitative poetry and he has no patience for it. Although imitation—either interlingual (as in the case of Prakrit and Sanskrit here) or intralingual (within Sanskrit) activity—is recognized as a mode of negotiation across languages. At the end of the chapter on ruses of appropriation Rajasekhara rejects imitative poetry:

Soyam kaverakavitvadayi sarvatha pratibimba kalpah pariharaniyaha…
Pruthaktvena na gruhnanti … svavapuh pratibimbitam

(A poet who wishes to escape the ignominy of being labelled a poetaster (non-poet) must always eschew imitative creation. For no reflection of the body can be treated as another body).

(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 188)

In the heteroglot scenario the sources of poetry are indeterminable and inexhaustible. The poet can draw from any source in any language. While justifying appropriation of sound compositions of other poets, Avantisuandari (a poet, said to be Rajasekhara's wife) argues that a poet on occasions can also draw from an original composed either in improper utterances or Mlechcha languages which are no longer in circulation (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 158). In the ultimate analysis Rajasekhara affirms that whoever brings forth novel imports, whoever draws on an ancient theme attractively—in vocalization, in meaning, in wit and conceit—must be seen as a great poet (2003, p. 172).

From the extensive, minute reflections on the polyglot poetic context, musical-poetic compositions and heterogeneous recitational modes and their response to and reception of earlier poets, Rajasekhara is virtually rearticulating the conditions of "translatability" in the Indian (Sanskrit) context. These conditions move across

internally differentiated linguistic, tonal-musical heritages, and contestatory situations. Yet, translation as such (in its Latinate metaphor[7]—content transfer) like imitative versification receives no significance in Rajasekhara's reflections. Unlike in the European Romantic tradition translation and criticism (even comparison) have not gained any autonomous status in enhancing the creative and reflective springs of these polyglot literary traditions of India.

8.3 Survivals

Musical and poetic sonority (*nada*) is seminal to Sanskrit (Vedic) traditions; the reflective-cognitive-imaginative strands of inquiry and thinking were woven together in metrical-musical modes in Sanskrit cultural formations. Such modes of articulation cannot yield to translation.[8] They can only be acoustically, performatively and improvisationally rendered. The persistence of this extraordinary phenomenon even after the proliferation of scriptive modes and indeed through them requires extended study and reflection. It must be noted that this heterogeneous heritage has, irrespective of the domain of concern (whether astral or mathematical sciences, ritual or *alamkara*, *vyakarana* or "philosophy", poetry or *purana*) sustained itself through mnemocultural versification and in metrical-tonal melodic articulations.

From mantras of Vedic/Upanisadic compositions, *sutra*s, *kavya*s, puranas and *itihasa*s received and responded to the Vedic imports in distinct and hybrid forms. If *smruti*s, Vedangas and *shastra darshana*s have emerged as unique and internally differentiated forms of response and modes of approaching the Vedic compositions, poets and Lakshanikas internalized and responded in unprecedented creative forms to this proliferating heritage. In other words, musical reflective modes of inquiry and thinking in Sanskrit cultural formations seem to make redundant an autonomous domain of "criticism" for eliciting the significance of the work and thus supplementing and extending its life. The paradigm of weaving together what and how (ontological and epistemological) questions in a composition appear to have made the parasitical supplemental aesthetics ("criticism" or "critique") irrelevant in the Indian context.

Given that modern European thought regards translation and criticism as the most cherished and covetable modes of ensuring the survival of tradition, how does the Sanskrit tradition enable itself to live on? How has it spread across and permeated inside and outside the subcontinent over millennia? If Sanskrit traditions almost eschew comparison, analysis and translation, how do these traditions

[7] First and foremost translation is a *res latina* and a *res romana*—a fundamental element of Latin and Roman culture. Cf. Berman (2009, p. 8).

[8] Cf. Derrida (2001, p. 181) on "failure of the translation", and Sallis (2002, pp. 120–122) on "untranslatability" of music: "Music would attest even more forcefully [than painting], if it were possible, the untranslatability of sense into sense: the impossibility of saying in words what is sounded in a musical composition is so patent as to be proverbial".

live on, then? How do these traditions move on with such practised indifference towards the foreign? What is there in these traditions that makes the most dynamic transactional modes of relating languages unnecessary for them?

8.4 Receptive Responsibility

If there is one seminal force that sustained the movement of Sanskrit traditions over millennia and enabled their dispersal in multiple languages and cultural forms, it can be called a *responsive reception*. All the major reflective and creative thinkers in the Sanskrit tradition affirm their debt to the earlier contributors of the *vangmaya*. It is difficult to imagine the emergence of literary inquiries in the absence of other reflective traditions that come forth in different forms earlier (*sutra*, *karika, vrutti*, *vyakhyana, shloka*, the *anga*s, etc.). In other words, all these inquiries are divergent ways of responding to and rearticulating the Vedic utterance in Sanskrit reflective traditions. Meditatively recapitulating in his own way the colossal spread of the entire *vangmaya*, Bhartruhari reiterates the received differently for his own purpose in his *Vakyapadiya*. The originless (*anadi*) resonant-sounding (*shabda*) morphs (*vivarta*) itself into divergent forms as the being-forms of the universe. As the singular divides and differentiates itself (*ekopyaneka vartmena*), differences (of forms and beings) move on divergent paths (*bhedanam bahumargatvam*) (Bhartruhari 2006, p. 5). This impulse to receive and differentiate from what is received has dispersed and augmented the Sanskrit traditions.

There is no single normative injunction that unifies these differences. Each differential emergence must be reckoned in relation to its location in the non-identical proliferation series (*tasya shakhasu drushyate*, says Bhartruhari: a particular experiment or articulation yields fruit when seen from its conventions of efficacy) (Bhartruhari 2006, p. 5). The proliferating forms (*bahurupashcha*—multiple forms) (Bhartruhari 2006, p. 6) lend themselves to multivalent reflective positions (*pravada bahudha mata*[9]—exchanges spread in multiple positions) (Bhartruhari 2006, p. 6). With utmost economy Bhartruhari recalls and reformulates about two millennia of Sanskrit reflective traditions. Yet the proliferating multiplicity of being-forms (genres or genos) lends to no confusion here. Bhartruhari grasps the essential force—the resonant-sounding that morphs itself into multiplicity of forms which inhabits and exceeds them:

> *Shabdashve vashrita shaktir vishvashyasya nibandhani*
> *Yannetrah pratibhatmayam bhedarupah pratiyate*
>
> (Bhartruhari 2006, p. 78)

[9] *Tasyartha vada rupani nishritah svavikalpajah*
Ekatvinam dvaitinamcha pravada bahudha matah
(Depending on their autonomous positions diverse arguments/positions concerning the Vedic imports emerged.)

(The force that binds the universe is sheltered in *shabda*. That sound-force comes forth as our singular discerning power and enables us to grasp the worldly happenings in heterogeneous forms).

The play of this sound-force must be realized beyond the divergent forms as the resonant-breath (*pranava rupena*) (Bhartruhari 2006, p. 7). This however, does not mean that the divergent forms are useless or superfluous. Immemorially or durationally cultivated capacity and enlightenment can be attained only through an exposure to divergent forms of learning. Only when one exposes oneself to different disciplines and *darshana*s does one gain competence and discernment in learning:

Prajna vivekam labhate bhinnai ragama darshanaih

(Bhartruhari 2006, pp. 484, 456)

(Discerning competence accrues when one exposes oneself to heterogeneous forms of learning).

In this recapitulative rearticulation of Bhartruhari we notice his immersed and intimate relation to the *vangmaya*. He receives it and as he rearticulates it he puts it in his own idiom. Bhartruhari's mode and relation to the *vangmaya* suggests that irrespective of spatio-temporal distances and differences, events and being-forms can always be intimately rearticulated. Nearly the two millennia of temporal distance between him and the Vedic *vangmaya* does not in any way form a hurdle for his recapitulative reflective composition. Similar critical creative impulse pervades literary inquiries in the Sanskrit tradition.

Following Bhartruhari who names and delineates different generic forms in which the *vangmaya* has spread out and responds to it in his singularity, Rajasekhara too, about half a millennium later, specifies sixteen different sources of learning in the *vangmaya*. The latter acknowledges that like the sages (*rishi*s) who composed hymns, all the *shastrakara*s and poets salute the Vedic provenance from which they receive their imports. But each of these receptions is transformed in its own compositional *prayoga*s. What they receive is never identified as some homogeneous, preexisting phenomenon:

Namostu tasyai shrutaye yam duhanti pade pade
Rushayah shastrakarashcha kavayashcha yatha mati

(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 97)

(Rishis, *shastrakara*s and poets again and again milk the *shruti* each according to one's reflective capability. I salute such *vangmaya*).

Shrutinam sanga shakhanam itihasa puranayoh
Arthagranthah kathabhyasah kavitvasyaika maushadham

(Rajasekhara 2003, p. 99)

(The only medicine for composing poetry is in the reception of multiply spread out Vedic compositions, their ancillary disciplines, imports of *itihasa*, *purana*s and the stories located in them. Only by learning and practising these can enable a poet in his work).

Rajasekhara devotes an entire chapter for instantiating the renowned sixteen sources of learning for poetic composition. Generically, thematically, and formally differentiated, these sources range from the Vedic *shruti*s, *smruti*s, *itihasa*s, *puranas*, *darshanas*, *shastra*s, *laukika* or worldly treatises, 64 *kala*s, medicinal, astrological and "political" discourses (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 95). He then goes on to cite specific instances of reception from each of these sources and responsive poetic compositions of each such reception. Poetic compositions from the heterogeneous sources will earn the poet's glory and fame, points out Rajasekhara:

> *Vedarthasya nibandhena shlaghante kavayo yatha*
> *Smrutinamitihasa sya puranasya tatha tatha*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 99)

> (The way the poets who, drawing on the *shruti vangmaya*, compose poems of Vedic import gain praise; in the same way those who forge meanings of *smruti-itihasa* and *purana* in their poetry too will receive praise).

Although Rajasekhara is referring to these genres as sources for poetic composition, these sources themselves come forth as responsive renderings of Vedic (and other) reflective creations. But what he formulates here as a praiseworthy creative rendering was to break open the confinements of emerging creative *desi* heteroglossia. Within a century after Rajasekhara this impulse of responsive rendering will pervade interlingually and animate and fecundate the heterogeneous *desha bhasha*s. We shall return to this later.

In instantiating receptive or responsive rendering of the *vangmaya*, Rajasekhara does not draw any categorical division between reflective and creative, analytical and poetic forms of composition. Here the focus is more on the relation of responsive reception than on ontological differences between reflective and creative forms of composition. None of the received forms such as *purana* or *itihasa* ever works in accord with such a division. *Puranas* defy the law of genre itself by weaving together multi-generic compositions. How does Rajasekhara regard the literary receptions of *shastric* formulations? How does the poet render the reflective resources of the past in his composition? How does he receive them?:

> *Yamstarka karkashan arthan suktishvadriyate kavih*
> *Suryanshava ivendau te kanchadarchanti kantatam*
>
> (Rajasekhara 2003, p. 104)

> (As the intensity of the sun rays are delicately and beautifully transformed by the moon so does the poet receive and reflect the recondite logical disputational learning in his composition).

Here it must be noted that Rajasekhara is not celebrating the superiority of any heliocentric figure and thus privileging the *shastric* insight, but emphasizing the transformative rendering of what is harsh and difficult to access directly. Moreover, for Rajasekhara the literary/poetic vision far surpasses any other (even divine) insight. The poet surpasses the master of vocalic expression (*shrutighana*) because the former brings forth newness into his utterance.

Although Rajasekhara largely exemplifies the mode of responsive reception in the intralingual context, he is acutely sensitive to receptions from interlingual contexts as well. Rajasekhara is aware of various regions (Karnata, Lata, Gauda, Magadha, Madhya, Dakshina, etc.), and he cites instances of reception from Prakrit. What is received from Prakrit for Rajasekhara is rendered delicate and delightful in Sanskrit—but what is rendered is not regarded as a translation. Sanskrit transforms what it receives—suggests Rajasekhara (2003, pp. 107–109).

8.5 Intimations of the Foreign

The work of responsive reception in Sanskrit *vangmaya* appears to make redundant the faculties of criticism and translation as sources for extending the life of the work. For reflective and creative forces forge the transformative response to what is received. In other words, Sanskrit *vangmaya* of the Vedic provenance internalizes and morphs what it gains. As this creative reflective forge, this onto-epistemological impulse itself is a response to a much more foundational or fundamental problematic of the body complex in Sanskrit traditions, it renders the empirical thematic of negotiating with the foreign (regarded as seminal in translation theory) superfluous.

The act of responsive reception is precisely what is emphasized in the Sanskrit traditions even in tending the body complex in one's finitudinal existence. The body complex itself is composed of, as elaborated earlier, the most irreducible material elements on the one hand and the radically intangible, materially inaccessible, ungraspable force on the other. If the mortal body is the instantiation of a mutable phenomenal form, what inhabits this form is the unexemplifiable, non-representable durational force. The force as it is sheltered in the material body appears to be palpable, proximate and within one's grasp. But given that it is inaccessible to the faculties of sense (in both senses), the force is at the same time immeasurably distanced, ungraspable, unperceivable. In a sense the force is nothing—but it inhabits the material form everywhere. In other words, every body shelters the enigmatic force that cannot be captured by the faculties of the body. As discussed earlier in this work this alien in the body is called *para* in Sanskrit reflective traditions.

Para is the most intimate *foreigner* who lives in the *pura*[10] (the town or habitat) of the body. The task of the temporal-finitudinal body is to learn to live with this absolute stranger who lives on without being touched or affected by the body. *Para* can never be assimilated and digested by the body and therefore they (*sharira* and *para*) cannot be conflated into a unity. As argued earlier, a sense of freedom and play will ensue only in cases where one has learnt to live the heterogeneous in one's own being—one's own body complex.

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[10] Although *para* as "it" inhabits the body (*pura*) is called Purusha—it has no virility attached to it. *Para* is rather beyond or before the division of gender—*para* is not phallic. After the division, *para* refers equally to male and female (*para shakti*—the other force, here conceived as female).

The tending of the body complex requires that the body does not attempt to devour, erase, or absorb without a trace of difference the *para*-foreign which is a part of, while being *apart* from, the body. This ability to tend is a gift that is transgenerationally acquired but put to work only in the finitude of the individuated embodied existence. Inassimilable, incomparable, unperceivable, intimately woven into the materiality of the body but rigorously heterogeneous with it, *para* cannot be exclusively reduced to any empirical material formation—the phenomena of bodies, of languages, *jati*s, *genos*, genders and generations. Every body, due to the very condition of its manifestation, is impelled to attend to the foreign within and not to substitute or confuse *para* with the empirically existing foreign tongues or foreign bodies; hence, the emphasis on the singularities of phenomenal existence (the diversity of *jati*s) in Sanskrit traditions. These singularities are iterable but incomparable and inassimilable through transferrals of sense; they are not totalizable. Each iteration requires transformative rendering of what is received.

As each singular entity learns to grapple with the *para* within, each of the heterogeneous singularities, its fractal existence comes forth differentially. These fractal singularities do not transact through translational comparative modes. Each lives on as a transformative iteration, differing and distancing itself from itself and the other, of what it is gifted with. The proliferation of divergent languages, poetic genres, performative forms and *jati*s in the Indian context can be seen as the effect of the force of the heterogeneous that brings forth the phenomenal recursively.

The colossal and minute process of configuring and disfiguring the phenomenal entities relentlessly without an origin or terminal is often referred to in the Sanskrit traditions as *vivarta* or *parivarta*. *Vivarta* is the perennial process of transformation, mutation that forges irreducible elements into forms and morphs and disperses the phenomenal entities internally to be rearticulated again and again. This origin and endless transformation of the clinamen occurs as the instantiation of the force changing itself into something else while keeping itself apart from its effects. As the discerning faculty the same force enables one to see the heterogeneity of forms. *Vivarta* is the play of force and form, the heterogeneous weave of *para* and *sharira*. The form or the body is the transformed (*parivartena*) effect of force—an effect that cannot capture or control the force that inhabits it.

Responsive reception is the discerning faculty that partakes the process of transformation even as it brings forth yet another form in receiving the given. All the major *desha bhasha*s were animated by this responsive reception as they exposed themselves to Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions. It can be shown that this very mode of response that is elaborated so far is in fact a rushed annotation of responsive rendering of Vedic intimations. The Upanishadic response, for instance, concentrates rather exclusively on the Vedic thematic of *para*, the body complex, freedom, and above all the sonic efficacy, and the process of *vivarta*. The response comes forth in poetic reflection in versification. The metrical-poetic Upanishadic genre, while receiving the Vedic reflective creative work does not exclusively reduce it to ritual context, as it happens in the case of the Vedic recitations.

In this responsive reception of the heritage the incidence of Sanskrit traditions receiving and responding to the foreign heritages (languages and epistemes)—appears to be very marginal and negligible; they remained indifferent to the (empirical) foreign. Despite protracted invasions and migrations through the Gandhara gateway or the Brahmaputra valley into the Indic subcontinent, we barely have instances of the Sanskrit tradition either translating the foreign (any of the Central Asian, Persian, Arabic, Greek, Tibeto-Sino-Burmese) languages or literary traditions. Whereas the appropriation of Sanskrit as the foreign idiom has proliferated across all these languages for millennia in the Common Era. This can be seen in Sassanid (Pahlavi) and Abbasid (Arabic) periods in the first millennium and the Mughal period (Persian) in the second.[11]

8.6 Monolingual Variance

The only Indic tradition that circulated most prominently into Sanskrit and moved beyond the subcontinent and spread across the entire Asian continent is of course Buddhism. Buddhism is the first Indian tradition to have been drawn toward the lithic turn. In its orthotic, iconic, architectural and institutional drive this tradition formed communities, built monasteries, and above all formed the first educational institutions. Although this inter-semiotic translation (verbal reflections into non-verbal codes) is visible in the Sanskrit traditions in the Common Era, we do not see a parallel to the interlingual translation in Sanskrit *vangmaya*. Sanskrit traditions seem to have remained indifferent to any thought as long as it remained alien to the idiom of these traditions. That is, the condition for any encounter with Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions required that the medium should remain Sanskrit. Otherwise, Sanskrit appeared to have recognized no other thought; or, it remained indifferent to such thought.

The indifference of Sanskrit to foreign languages appears to be the result of the former's sense of the irreducible limitation of the finitudinal in general (of which language-vocal-visual is just one empirical instance) in accessing *para* which is sheltered in the finite. Sanskrit's apparent monolingualism has more to do with this double bind or aporteic relation between the material and immaterial, phenomenal and non-phenomenal, instantial and durational, host and guest, habitat and the

[11] Here, one can surely mention the peculiarity of the field of astronomy/astrology. This field for some reason appears to have been more receptive to the foreign than any other fields of Sanskrit traditions. The earliest (and probably the only one) foreign text that appeared in a Sanskrit rendering is Sphujidhvaja's *Yavanajataka* (mid 3rd century CE). Similarly, after the travel of Sanskrit astronomy and mathematical compositions into Arabic in Abbasid period, Arabic texts from this domain get translated into Sanskrit during the Sultanate and Mughal periods. Despite such apparent translational flurry, these Islamic sciences "did not fundamentally reshape or eclipse Sanskrit mathematical science" (Plofker 2009, p. 277; also p. 47, pp. 266–278). Also see Ansari (2004, pp. 587–608).

enigmatic inhabitant (*shariraka*), *pura* and *purusha*, *sharira* and *para*, etc. In this reckoning every language—or language in general has the chiasmatic monolingual structure.

No wonder only when the Buddhist thinkers began to compose their polemos in Sanskrit, do we see a powerful and "productive" confrontation of reflection taking place (between the Vaidic and Buddhist traditions). We have no instance of a *darshanika* (that is, from the Vedic tradition) or a Lakshanika translating a Pali composition of significance into Sanskrit for any kind of confrontation. Similarly none of the lists of Mahapuranas contains either a Buddhist composition or a Buddhapurana. Similarly, even if one accepts that the Lakshanika poets like Jagannatha Pandita or Appayya Dikshita were possibly aware of Persian, we barely see any kind of translational or comparative work emerging in the Sanskrit tradition during the second millennium. It is another matter to refer to Persian ruler-savants like Akbar and Dara Shukhou who arranged for Persian to receive Sanskrit. This does not prove that there was a confrontation let alone a *samvada* of reflective and creative traditions in the Islamic epoch. Here it must be mentioned that in the Mughal court translation depended mostly on an intermediary language. The team of Sanskrit pandits gathered by the court offered accounts of particular compositions (the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata* or even the Upanishads) in Hindi and the court dubashis in turn rendered them in Persian. None of Akbar's main courtiers (the sober Abul Fazl or the grumpy al-Badauni) knew any Sanskrit (cf. Ali 1999; Ganeri 2011, pp. 11–60; Das 2005, pp. 8–25).[12]

Similarly, despite the magnitude of European Indological work in the last two centuries, one wonders whether there was really any confrontation, epistemically sensitive dialogue between Sanskrit and European traditions. For unlike the Buddhists, none of the European Indological scholars (or even Persian-Islamic savants) hazarded to compose their arguments *in* the Sanskrit language to receive attention of any of the contemporary pandits. For the addressee of the Indological (and Perso-Islamic) enterprise remains a determined subject of European humanities even to this day. European translations of Sanskrit compositions, following the "victor's prerogative" model of translation, by default as it were, were domesticating the foreign.[13] The faculties of translation, criticism and comparison were decisively deployed in this violence of appropriation. This encounter even to

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[12] One curious account of a pandit refusing to enter Akbar's palace indicates the cultural resistance or indifference of Sanskrit tradition to Yavana culture. As Akbar was keen to know about the *Mahabharata* from him, the pandit was lifted over the wall to reach the balcony level of Akbar's palace and from the palace balcony, Akbar conversed with him (in Hindi, of course through translators) (Das 2005, p. 11, footnote 13).

[13] Here, one must point out that Adrian Claro's effort to salvage a strand of German Romantic translation activity as "promoting hospitality toward the foreign" appears only limited to European past "in history", whereas the colossal German Indological translation machine can hardly be said to be hospitable to the sonic-reflective compositions of Sanskrit tradition (Claro 2009, p. 112). On the contrary, we have the instances of 19th century German Indologists setting out to correct Upanishadic Sanskrit. Cf. Olivelle (1998, pp. 173–187); also Deshpande (2001).

this day gets plotted on the epistemic protocols of European forms of annexing-representations.

Reflecting on this peculiar "one way" transaction between Indian (mainly Sanskrit) and other foreign cultures, J.L. Mehta observes that India has moved on with absorption, assimilation and rejection but retained its identity and continuity; but, he goes on, "it has at no time *defined itself* in relation to the other, nor acknowledged the other in its unassimilable otherness, nor in consequence occupied itself with the problem of relationship as it arises in any concrete encounter with the other". How does one explain such a strange situation? "The other was allowed to live, mostly in peace, but without any effort at mutual dialogue and understanding". There was no explicit intellectual attempt to understand the difference of Christianity or Islam or "let them address us in their truth". Mehta's observation here carries only a half truth. While it is true that the Sanskrit tradition did not confront and engage with these two invasive forces, but the idea of India and its traditions that was institutionalized since the 19th century was little more than European representations of India; this is precisely the point that Mohanty makes when he describes the asymmetric situation that prevails in talking about India.

But how does Mehta view this Indian "indifference"? Mehta's account of this situation is rather odd: The Indian "strategy was one of defense through insulation rather than one of active grappling or dialogue and this was perhaps made necessary by the exigencies of historical circumstance and, partly at least, by the very nature of these alien incursions and their uncomprehending claims". This historicist, circumstantial and rather ad hoc explanation comes as a bit of surprise from a philosopher of such eminence. For, such "indifference" in Sanskrit traditions does not occur only with regard to the foreign; one can notice such "letting be"-ethos prevail even among inter-*jati* relations as well; and this cannot be explained through a recourse to history. It is very difficult to come across accounts of *jati*s describing each other from specific *jati* positions. Without pausing to examine this singular systemic or structural way of being Mehta goes on to plead that "It is time that we opened ourselves to the differences now … and turn the monologue of the past into a real dialogue" (Mehta 1985, pp. 117–118, 122, emphasis in quotations in original). How can such a dialogue be possible without taking the risk of configuring the specificity or differentia specifica of what is called India?

What appears to distinguish Sanskrit traditions is that on the one hand they make translation redundant and on the other they are either indifferent to the foreign tongue or consider it inefficacious. Secondly, given the musical-reflective, sonic improvisational modes these traditions forge for grappling with the material-finitudinal and the foreign-intangible, these traditions seem to insist on each language and tongue to work out this problematic within the singularity of its material existence. No language (or existence—*genos*) can hope to be an effective substitute for another. The force of *vivarta* does not guarantee unity and permanence to any phenomenal material formation—be it linguistic or biological/cultural. It transforms that which comes forth or forms.

8.7 Generic Dehiscence

Sanskrit does not translate but Sanskrit gets translated: this immense paradox shapes and structures Indic reflective and creative traditions. If for nearly two millennia we find no instances of interlingual or even intersemiotic translations in Sanskrit traditions, we begin to see the emergence and spread of these two modes of translation on a tectonic scale in the Common Era. Although Sanskrit compositions from early on amplified their sonic efficacy they were also pervasively visual and imagistic. In their graphic descriptions and eloquent metrical musical tonality Sanskrit versification conjured ekphrasis and emphasized sonority. Although this mutual permeability of the musical and visual was prominently at work, this mode neither derived from nor brought forth any plastic or graphic material manifestations almost until the Common Era. As we have seen earlier, the iconic turn is a belated "event" in Indian cultural formations. In other words, although a certain exchange of modes was inherently at work in Sanskrit compositions, these were not instantly translated into other tangible material substrates or forms.

This enigmatic resistance or indifference to intersemiotic extension of vocal-visual formations into plastic-graphic forms has barely received attention in the Indian context. But every account of the sculptural graphical or architectural forms—which only receive empirical historical-archaeological accounts—derives these forms from the semiotically untranslating compositions. As shown earlier from Ananda Coomaraswamy to Doris Meth Srinivasan, such accounts of derivation expanded without respite. Predictably, none of them addresses the pronounced absence of translation—even though these compositions wove verbal, musical, vocal and gestural modes insistently.

Although Sanskrit does not translate, but by the middle of the first millennium of the Common Era one sees the spread of Persian, Indo-Tibetan, Chinese, Greek, Latin and other languages in the subcontinent. Over a period of nine centuries, rendering of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese was the only massive translation programme that developed in the entire antiquity. About 1,700 texts were translated during these centuries (Pollock 1996, p. 113). Even within the Sanskrit traditions, the impulse of responsive reception vigorously articulates the vocal-musical into gestural-performative (dance, the verbal-graphical into plastic-architectural, the figural-acoustic into tangible visual forms and above all vocalic metrical compositions celebrating and legitimizing those (intersemiotic)) articulations began to be forged.

New *sutra*, *shastric* and *puranic* compositions elaborating these articulations came forth during this period (*Natyashastra, Sri Vishnudharmottara Mahapurana*, and the *Kamasutra* are the most celebrated). Even as the responsive reception was actively multiplying and differentiating Sanskrit into divergent genres and articulations, Sanskrit began to animate and transform the prominent (Tamil) and emergent *desha bhasha*s (Kannada, Gujarati, Telugu, Marathi and others)—most decisively and profoundly. In this radical process, Sanskrit not only linguistically

fecundated the *bhasha*s, but disseminated its musical-reflective thinking across the regionally dynamic heteroglot scenarios. The *bhasha*s not only opened themselves to the reflective imports of the Sanskrit traditions but internalized the impulse of responsive reception to which they were exposed. Whether these *bhashas* faced and responded to any other reflective creative tradition of the magnitude of Sanskrit either before or after their productive encounter with the latter is yet to be discovered or substantiated.

Responsive reception can be effective only in contexts where the receiving linguistic, cultural, semiotic traditions are strong enough to respond; that is, the receiving tradition must be singular enough to transform what it receives and bring forth the unprecedented (either in the receiving tradition or disseminating tradition). The creative and reflective strength of *bhasha* traditions amply demonstrates this double transformative capacity. While profoundly changing themselves, these traditions modify the guest that enters their abode. Thus, the performative compositions of Tamil Alwars and Nayanmars and the reflective recitational utterances of Kannada Vachanakaras are difficult to imagine without the radical impulse of responsive reception being at work. These song and recitational mnemocultural traditions while receiving and responding to the Upanishadic imports mediated already by the *puranic* mode brought forth creative and performative forms that had not existed in those (Sanskrit as well as the *bhasha*) traditions. In this process, the Sanskrit heritage is displaced but gets disseminated and consequently it undergoes transformation.

While the (Sanskrit) guest sings/recites in an alien tongue, the (*bhasha*) host shelters and nurtures the "foreign" tradition in its abode. In other words, the encounter between Sanskrit and the *bhasha* traditions reiterates the structural relations of *para* and *sharira*, of the untouchable and inaccessible but intimately proximate on the one hand and the tangible and mediating but finitudinally delimited on the other. Every articulation of this encounter generates novel creative and reflective genres and *genos*. From the end of the first millennium of the Common Era, this productive reiteration radically enhanced the *bhasha* traditions, affirmed the dissemination of the Sanskrit (linguistic, semiotic, vocal, gestural, figural, plastic, visual and reflective) performative compositions, and transformed them. It must be pointed out that along with the *bhasha* encounter with Sanskrit, Sanskrit traditions flourished independently in the *bhasha* regions without taking recourse to interlingual translation.

As both Bhartruhari and Rajasekhara emphasize, Sanskrit nurtured in these regions received the vocal accents of these other languages. Sanskrit became further accentuated and was woven into the *bhasha* traditions with the interlingual exchange. The terms used, for instance, to designate this process of responsive reception in Telugu variously are: *Andhrikarana* (turning/making into Andhra), *Teluguseta* (doing [into] Telugu), *Andhramuseyu* (Andhra-fy, rendering into Andhra), etc. No one in the context of Telugu region for a millennium now has ever described this encounter as *Sanskrutikarana*, or Sanskritization (the term appears in ill-thought 20th century accounts—ill-thought, for Sanskrit here is seen on the lines of Latin, as an imperial-colonial ideology).

8.8 Hospitable Provocations

Sanskrit as reflective and creative heritage has deeply permeated into the *bhasha* domains and reshaped them profoundly. The *bhasha* regions have by and large remained hospitable to this heritage. Hospitality also brought forth emulative animus and jealous declarations of the receivers' alleged superiority in the bhasha domains (as in Kannada—Kumaravyasa) (Krishnamoorthy 2009, pp. 316–327). In all these varied receptions, Sanskrit played the intimate alien in the encounter, the alluring but inaccessible or unidentifiable *para* inhabiting different *bhasha* bodies.

Along with the reception of this heterogeneous structure, the *bhasha*s seem to have received another structural response from the Sanskrit heritage. By and large the *bhasha* domains maintain a cultivated reticence or indifference towards other contemporary *bhasha* domains. That is, no *bhasha* domain seems to have gained any *para* (foreign) status with regard to other *bhasha* domains. Further, no *bhasha* domain projects any cognizance of other *bhasha* responsive receptions of Sanskrit. Nannaya, who Andhra-fied the *Mahabharata*, never mentions his Kannada predecessor Pampa nor acknowledges the Tamil receptions of the *Mahabharata* (which happened in the 10th century). It is only the 20th century Telugu literary critics (a more recent opening), who demonstrate their literary national distinction, offer comparisons of Nannaya and Pampa and valorize the former. Comparison and analysis (that is, criticism) do not appear to be the sacred tools of the reflective creative compositions even in the *bhasha* heritages.

Apparently, Sanskrit was the only heritage which the *bhasha* regions were responding to during this period. Surely, Sanskrit was not the only learning which fecundated the *bhasha*s. For centuries, Buddhism and Jainism deeply marked many *bhasha* domains. Yet, unlike in Sanskrit, it is difficult to come across any sustained confrontation of these heritages in the *bhasha* regions (it is true that for centuries the Jaina impact on Kannada literary reflective milieu continued; yet, the continuities with Sanskrit show greater longevity). In other words, the *bhasha* regions do not set or demonstrate any vigorous confrontation between their linguistic domains and Buddhist, or Jain, reflective traditions on a comparable scale to what the Sanskrit tradition provides. Surely, it should be possible to track and substantiate the cross-hatching of the *bhasha* regions with Prakrit and the reflective traditions that emerged from them.

The general thrust of our account is to emphasize the modes in which the impulse of responsive reception faced the heterogeneous structure of the received (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha, Bhuta) traditions. When the *bhasha*s faced the already internally self-differentiating Sanskrit traditions, the former not only displaced the latter, but in sheltering them, they also augmented them. After this coming into each other, what the *bhasha*s generated can be called the *paradigm of Sanskrit plus* (or Prakrit plus). That is, in enfolding Sanskrit within the divergent *bhasha*s, each of the latter has enhanced Sanskrit in different tongues; Sanskrit gets Kannadized, Tamilized, Marathized, Odiaized and so on. The responsive *bhasha*s received and modified Sanskrit even as it permeated and fecundated these *bhasha*s differently.

Yet, even during this entire period (from the end of the first millennium to almost the end of the second) Sanskrit moved on and rearticulated its heritage reflectively and creatively. Significant work of the Naiyyayikas and Lakshanikas emerged in this millennium when the *bhasha*s began to be animated, and many of these poet-thinkers have emerged from the *bhasha* regions (Dandi from Tamil country, Jagannatha from Andhra, Rajasekhara from the Madhya *desha* and a whole group from Kashmir).

The phenomenon of internal transformation of the received does not suggest any fragmentation and scattering of languages which were either unified or presumed to be one at some anterior point. Therefore, the interlingual transformations unleashed in the encounter between Sanskrit (also Prakrit, etc.) and *bhasha* regions do not refer to some veiled desire for a linguistic unification—some pre-Babelian theological temptation. The heterogeneity of languages is not the consequence of some divine wrath—but testifies to the always already distanced and differentiated reflective and creative domains.[14] They are all, however, exposed to the force of mutation or *vivarta*; without *vivarta* there is neither language nor culture and not even a *jati*; the morphing work of this force is not reducible only to linguistic phenomena. There can be no reconciliation of linguistic or other diversified modes of form-making. Each language and domain is a discrete instantiation that cannot be united into some grand messianic culmination. The force of *vivarta* does not leave even the gods intact.

Languages like *jati*s move on and make heterogeneous contexts, communities, cultures and communications in the Indian contexts. As biocultural formations, internally self-differentiating, *jati*s divide unities (therefore, *jati* cannot strictly be conflated with comm*unity*) and differentiate languages and cultures persistently. As they differentiate internally they drift and proliferate without end. Nowhere does one find, among the mnemocultural formations of India, the diversification of *jati*s and languages as the result of some divine curse. Nowhere in the immeasurable heterogeneity of these formations does one find any drive for unification either, or denial of *jati*/culture differentiation and an obsession for one supreme unifying language for a united people for making themselves a name and a nation. The diversity affirms different modes of being and different ways of going about in the world with others.

In short, neither a passage from theology (desire for unity punished by the God's curse) nor a passage to philosophy (abstraction of meaning—or content transfer from the divergent, denial of plurivocal articulations) (Derrida 1985, pp. 122–123) impinges on the *jati*-language-culture formations of the Indian subcontinent. Beyond recognizing this heterogeneity of *jati*s and cultures (or precisely because of this) it is perhaps impossible to systematize them. They cannot be made to fall into one order and follow a universal commanding norm. Such a *genos* (*jati*s, genres,

[14] In his report for the International College of Philosophy, Derrida specifies the need for "basic" or "fundamental" research on language, "the multiplicity of languages, and the general problematic of translation" (Derrida 2004a, pp. 241–242).

gender, generativity) cannot be mastered by anyone—neither by a singular god nor by a book or institution. Even gods are impelled to abide by *jati* forms and formations (Krishna is a Yadava [Shudra], Rama is a Kshatriya, Jambava a Chandala, Madel is a Rajaka, Maremma is a Banjaran and so on).

Whether Sanskrit or the *bhasha*s, all languages and cultural formations in the Indian context are structured by the heterogeneous. Drawing on this force of the heterogeneous, each of the *genos* opens itself for a responsive reception. This sense of the heterogeneous is what precisely one can notice when the Telugu Chalukyan king desired to see a Telugu *Mahabharata*. He tells his court poet, Nannaya that:

> *Bahu bhashala bahuvidhamula bahujanamula valana vinuchu*
> (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, p. 14)

In multiple languages, multiple modes, and from multiple *genos* (*jana*s) he had *listened* and he delights in listening to the *Bharata*, says the king. In other words, the *Mahabharata* had already been deeply disseminated or dispersed across heterogeneous mnemoscapes. The king's court comes closer to the learned royal setting that Rajasekhara sketches a century earlier in his work.[15]

The poet chosen to render the *Mahabharata* into Telugu was a jewel of that court who was himself deeply shaped by such cultivated Sanskrit heritage. Nannaya was born into a lineage of Brahmins who participated in fire ceremonies and ritual recitations; they were competent in determining utterances extensively and in detail, were performatively learned in the Vedic mantras, immersed in the cognitive aspect of many *purana*s (such as *Brahmanda*) and were endowed with many other virtues (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, p. 9).

The learned king asks the versatile poet to render into Telugu what was formed into the *Bharata* by Vyasa. The rendering must be accomplished with excelling reflection and rewarding elucidation of the *Mahabharata* in Telugu. This task requires Nannaya to render what has been formed in Sanskrit with his (Nannaya's own) reflective and creative competence. Nannaya describes himself as worldly (*laukika*) and as someone who shines in his distinction of composing in *both* Sanskrit and Telugu (*ubhayabhasha rachana shobhitu*).

Although all this can be bracketed as in accord with poetic conventions of relating oneself in a lineage, what emerges eloquently here is the affirmation of a filiation with Sanskrit traditions. As Nannaya is considered the "first" original poet in Telugu, one can say that this mode of relating to Sanskrit traditions henceforth serves as the covetable model. This kind of filiating—which is also disaffiliating (for spatio-temporal, linguistic-generic factors)—is conventionally rendered in a

[15] Rajaraja Narendra's court was composed of *shastra* pandits who delved deep into the endless *vyakaranashastra* ("grammatical studies"); *purana pravakta*s who could offer oral exegesis on many *purana*s and on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*s; extraordinary poets who could forge delicate, delightful sentences shining with erotic and other affective moods; the most competent and renowned pandits of logic and argumentation who possessed the ocean of *shastra*s formed with the sustenance of multi-branched logical/argumentative s*hastra*s, and other savants.

brief section called *avatarika*—emergent formation. Here, the poet invokes and salutes the renowned predecessors and moves on. Nannaya praises only two poets and they are from the Sanskrit tradition: Valmiki and Vyasa.

8.9 Partaking in Intimacies

After Nannaya, the later Telugu poets invoke and filiate themselves to two traditions—Sanskrit and Telugu. Thus, Potana (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries) in his magnificent rendering of the *Bhagavata* salutes both Sanskrit and Telugu poets of the past and future. Telugu literary traditions take root in the responsive rendering of *itihasa* and *purana*s. Curiously, none of the Telugu poets from the eleventh to the end of the eighteenth century appears to have rendered any major Sanskrit *kavya*s (with the exceptions of the *Ramayana* and Srinatha's *Shrungara Naishadhamu* in the fifteenth century) into Telugu. The major *itihasa* (the *Mahabharata*), the *kavya* (the *Ramayana*) and the *purana* (*Bhagavata*) are all collective works of various poets.

The *Mahabharata* was rendered into Telugu by three poets over a period of two-and-a-half centuries. One early version of the *Ramayana* (*Bhaskara Ramayananamu*) was Teluguized by four poets over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and the *Bhagavatamu* by five poets in a century's time. In a way, as they wove the fabric of Telugu literary-reflective traditions, different poets drew on different threads of Sanskrit traditions and composed the colour, tone and texture of the Telugu weave. While they were most accomplished in Telugu, they were also deeply immersed in Sanskrit. Tikkana (who composed the major part of the Telugu *Mahabharatamu*) declared that he would excel in the style of dual modes or traditions of composing poetry:

> *Ubhaya kavya praudhi batinchu shilpamunan baragudan*
>
> (Tikkana 1960, 1.13: 2)

As he had the talent and acumen to compose poetry in Telugu and Sanskrit, he was also known as a friend of both Sanskrit and Telugu poets (*ubhaya kavi mitrundu*). Here, the dual poetic traditions are also seen as referring to acoustic and visual compositions, prose and poetic genres and the renowned *marga* (Sanskrit) and *deshi* modes as well. Although Tikkana is said to have evinced greater competence in Sanskrit literary language (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, pp. 18–19), in his determination to compose poetry in Telugu he drew extensively from Telugu lexical sources (Tikkana 1960, p. viii). Nannaya's composition, on the other hand, largely appropriates Sanskrit lexis into Telugu, but for all that it is the Telugu flavour and the texture that prevail in his rendering of the *Mahabharata* (Subramaniam 2000–2007, p. lix).

In the Teluguization of the *Mahabharata*, it is impossible to establish isomorphic relation between the Vyasa composition and the Telugu ones consistently. Although all these poets received the storyline contours from the "original", each

of these poets enhanced, transformed and augmented in detail, description and versification. Neither poetic forms (stanza types), nor the multiple narrative threads, nor even the more substantial sections were rendered from the Sanskrit sequentially; no law of fidelity governed this process of Teluguization.

The Sanskrit stanza form—Teluguized—was overwhelmed by the Telugu stanza forms (such as *Sisa, Kanda, Ataveladi, Tetagiti, Champakamala*, etc.). Narrative sequences of the original were changed and above all what one might consider the centre piece of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*—the *Bhagavad Gita*—finds no place in Tikkana's responsive rendering of Vyasa. Tikkana excises this pivotal reflective (and *non-narrative*) part completely. Similarly, the celebration of Hari's genealogy (*Harivamshamu*) in Vyasa's text finds no place in the Telugu *Mahabharata*. Taking Vyasa elsewhere, these poets were generating unprecedented poetry in Telugu; sheltering Vyasa in their hospitable *bhasha* folds, they were reconfiguring him. While preparing their *bhasha* soil for the dissemination of Sanskrit, they were also betraying it. They divided themselves to generate an incomparable poetic, reflective body complex. These poets, in short, were countersigning the Sanskrit heritage and affirming its survival; its living on beyond its provenance.

It is important to point out that throughout the second millennium (until the 19th century) when the Telugu *bhasha* domain received Sanskrit compositions, the latter were not treated as isolated, unified, discrete works. That is, when the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana* were Teluguized, the former were not reckoned as some isolated, fully made, or completed objects. The radical impulse of responsive reception was not confined just to transferring some static object already out there—but was deeply immersed in responding to it with the enhanced resources that the Sanskrit heritage has generated *after* the *itihasa*, *purana*, *kavya* genres proliferated *within* the Sanskrit traditions. In other words, the Telugu poets (perhaps like other *bhasha* poets) were simultaneously exposed not just to the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* but to the entirety of the internally self-differentiating Sanskrit creative and reflective traditions. Therefore, the colossal process of Teluguization cannot be measured as a simple translation, as content transfer, between two languages. The model of fidelity and betrayal is of little value here.

When Nannaya in his dazzling brevity characterizes the radial plurivocality of the *Mahabharata*—one gets the intimations of the extended volume of the sonic heritage. Nannaya, early in his composition, configures the *Mahabharata* as the sum of what the many claimants have affirmed:

> *Dharmatattvajnulu dharmashastrambani adhyatmavidulu vedantamaniyu*
> *Nitivichakshuanul nitishastrambani kavivrushabhulu mahakavyamaniyu*
> *lakshanikulu sarvalakshya samgrahamani, eitihasikulitihasa maniyu*
> *barama pauranikul bahupurana samuchchayambani mahi goniyaduchundru*
> (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, p. 24)

(Thinkers of dharma call it dharma *shastra*, savants of the "self", Vedanta. Discerners of ways of being call it *nitishastra*, the best of the poets, *mahakavya*; Lakshanikas treat it as the compendium of all poetic exemplifications, carriers of generational lore call it *itihasa*,

great performers of *purana*s call it a multi-*puranic* compilation: thus, they all extol this creation of the learned Vyasa in this world).

Nannaya gives a glimpse into the multiple ways in which the heritage has spread across—and the power of a composition to radiate its pluridimensional reach. But this also amplifies the burden of the poet. Lakshanikas and the *shastrakara*s have repeatedly emphasized this burden. The immense task of the poet is to reach out and respond to just everything, every form of learning and creation that comes forth.

A whole range of sources of learning seem to already impinge on Nannaya for his poetic reception and response. They range from *vaiyakarani*s ("grammarians") from Panini to Bhartruhari, *darshanika*s like Jaimini, Kapila, Badarayana, and others, Mimamsakas like Kumarila and Prabhakara, Vedantins like Shankara, Lakshanikas from Bhamaha to Anandavardhana, Smruti-Shastrakaras from Bharata, Manu, Vatsayana and various forms of exegetical explications of *shastra* compositions such as *vyakhyana*s, *bhashya*s, *vrutti, vartika*, etc.) (Rajasekhara 2003, pp. 1–4), *kavi*s from Valmiki to Bana and others, all the *purana*s and above all the Vedic and Upanishadic learning. Further, the Lakshanikas had by Nannaya's time already initiated fundamental inquiries into the literary (*kavya*) phenomena. Therefore, anybody who wished to be a poet of worth could not afford to be ignorant of the magnitude of preparation he was impelled to go through.

The learned king's court (the kind described by Rajasekhara, Nannaya and others like Srinatha), with a multifaceted composition of creative and reflective talents, threw open the testing ground for the poet. In such a context, the *Mahabharata* had already been received and reflected upon by different claimants. The *Mahabharata* was no longer isolated from these nested textures of responsive reception.

Aanandavardhana (1998, p. 961) had already configured the *Mahabharata* as "*Shastrarupa kavyachayanvayi*" (*shastra* form under poetic shelter). Rajasekhara designated it as "*shastretihasa*" (*itihasa* with *shastra* imports). For Lakshanikas, such tagging of creative-reflective work is rather incidental. Their major focus is on the essence of the literary (or the poetic); or more appropriately how the essence of the poetic gets generated. Their work is more akin to a performative act rather than a prescriptive account of how to write poetry. A performative act requires a responsive act and not a statement of assertion or a propositional declaration. The fact that their literary inquiries deeply impacted composers of the literary can be noticed among the *bhasha* poets.

The patron king of Nannaya, while urging the latter to render the *Mahabharata* into Telugu, discloses that he had seen many modes of grand affect-inducing poetic plays (*udatta rasanvita kavyanataka kramamulu pekku suchiti*). Affect (*rasa*) as the essence of the literary was a more recent formulation of an already explored (by Bharata) domain of literary-performative experience. Lakshanikas had probed into this thematic intensely by the time of Nannaya. One can notice here the weight of the plurivocal heritage that Nannaya sets out to receive and respond to. Given the fact that this radial composition draws on and grafts from a

whole range of internally differentiated reflective and creative forms and compositions, the *Mahabharata* already appears to be a genre-defying composition. Hence, the compound epithets of the Lakshanikas (*shastrarupa kavyachayanvayi, shastretihasa*).

8.10 Melodies of Thought

In the Indian traditions, a new genre (*genos*) comes into existence as a responsive reception of the available or received; the new genre morphs or transforms the received. Such a radical protean process cannot be reduced to some fixed categories or genres. Therefore, although Nannaya is drawn towards composing a *kavya*, he cannot abstract some literary essence or content exclusive of the plurivocal imports of the heritage. As he seeks to affiliate himself in the lineage of Sanskrit traditions, he is impelled to forge his *kavya* by drawing on the *shruti, smruti, darshana, kavya*, and *vyakhyana* traditions. Therefore, the *kavya*s that Nannaya and others composed are deeply shaped by the multimodal reflective force. The eminent Telugu writer Viswanatha Satyanarayana (1957, p. 23) points out that Nannaya's work cannot be seen as a mere repetition of Vyasa's original; for, Nannaya also composes his *bhashya* and *vyakhyana* on Vyasa's composition.

Nannaya would recompose the available *Mahabharata* in such a way that it would appeal to the most learned savants, the most accomplished poets and also the unlettered. How would he do this? He would delight, he says, through pleasant poetic-imaginative modes of composition, with seductive lexical weave, and with an aphoristic energy that laces varied threads of counsel. The radical medium which morphs itself as it weaves out such radial articulations is the sonic amphora—the tonal-vocalic manifestations of the throat. Nannaya is known for his command over *shabda* (sonic materiality); he is praised as *shabdashasanudu* (the one who can order or command *shabda*). Nannaya certainly inherits the musical reflective sources from the *shruti* tradition and forges his acoustic compositions.

Although the musical strand here resonates with the Sanskrit traditions, unlike the Vedic compositions—which are mainly non-narrative in their expansion (they amplify sound in various ways), Nannaya's compositions draw on the protean multi-narrative impulse of the *purana*s—an impulse already at work in the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. Nannaya's composition radiates with heterogeneous nodes threaded by the non-narrative fibres (aphoristic counsels). As it excels in poetic and *puranic* articulation, Nannaya, differing from the Lakshanikas, is said to have responded to Vyasa's *Mahabharata* by transforming it into a *kavyetihasa*. That is, Nannaya, drawing on different sources, creates a poem that reworks the reflective narrative traditions and reverses Rajasekhara's characterization of the *Mahabharata*. Similarly, if Anandavardhana sought to designate the *Mahabharata* with *shanta rasa* (tranquil mood) as the predominant affect—Tikkana amplifies the *vira rasa* (heroic mood)—the warrior affect (which perhaps is the reason for the elimination of the *Gita*) in his responsive reception of Vyasa.

Both the later poets who contributed to the *Mahabharata*—Tikkana and Errapragada—conceive their work as verbal-musical composition oriented to appeal to the ear. Tikkana is decisive when he says: he would compose poems and prose genres to receive the nectar of the *Bharata* through the folds of the ear and to delight the Andhras (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, p. 15). Similarly, Errapragada describes his own contribution as appealing to the folds of the ears of great poets.[16] The poetic-musical, vocal-metrical strands of Sanskrit inheritance continues to flourish even until the recent times. This strand masters, enhances, amplifies and braids the Sanskrit and Telugu sonic mnemoscapes. This musical-verbal reflective work performatively enhances melopoeiac thought in the Sanskrit and *bhasha* traditions.

As can be seen from the above discussion, the Telugu poets not only lovingly receive the multifaceted Sanskrit heritage, they bracket the temporal distances that demarcate the events and works of that heritage. Thus although there is a temporal distance between the *shruti, smruti* and *purana* traditions (according to historians), these get synchronously, contemporaneously articulated in the later poets. In other words, all the work of the past is always simultaneously available to the diachronically distanced poet—that is, the poets of different periods.

If the *Mahabharata* poets put to work this "method" (becoming synchrony of diachrony and vice versa) and the structure (self-differentiating and distantiating) of the heritage, Potana receives Vyasa's *Bhagavatapurana* and literally shelters it in the Telugu heart differently and decisively. For Potana, poetry moves and communicates with the heart—and it does so musically and metrically:

> *Shravana shubhagamaina chandoniyati galgi, yatulu galgi prasa gatulu galigi*
> *Tipi layalu galigi telugulo padyalu yedada lupagalavu hoyalu galigi*
>
> (Potana 2007, p. ix)

> (Acoustically sumptuous, endowed with metrical rules, rhymes, rhythms and caesura, containing delighting sway, the poems of Telugu can move the heart with their elegant throw).

Potana was acutely sensitive to the plurivocal context of the heritage and the challenge of his task. He declares proudly in a verse: I know that Sanskrit delights some, Telugu appeals to some others; and some others love both. Therefore, my poetry will touch all these constituencies (Potana 2007, p. ix). Although Potana is immersed in Teluguizing Sanskrit, his poetry has three parts Sanskrit and one part Telugu (Narayanacharyulu 2000, p. 181). Yet, he can swing from lofty polysyllabic Sanskrit compounds to musical alliterative soft Telugu effortlessly ("*Ammalaganna yamma, mugurammala mulaputamma* …" mother of all mothers, mother of three mothers, and the original mother) (Potana 2007, p. 4).

Given his passion for metrics and vocalic-rhythms, Potana is perhaps the most musical poet of the Telugu *kavya* heritage. He is moved by his sense that music alone, transcending words, can touch and move the heart—that music is

[16] G.V. Subramaniam quotes Errapradgada in his Preface to Aranyaparva (*Mahabharatamu* 2000–2007, p. 3).

quintessentially *cordial*. The sonic force of music perhaps would enable one to access the intimations of *para* that inhabits the material-finitudinal *pura* of the body. No language has the capacity to render poetic reflection in its totality—for it emerges from beyond the realm of language. The paradox of poetry is that it still tries to articulate this inarticulable ("a raid on the inarticulate") experience (Eliot 1944/1983, p. 26). To accomplish this within the limits of language, poets forge the language with the material, figural force of verbal and visual resources. In great poetic works of language, if figural work takes us beyond language, metrical sonance moves us beyond figurality, and the sonic force that is beyond metrics offers the most appropriate resource for articulating poetic yearning (Potana, 2007, pp. ix–x). Potana remains the most outstanding composer of such sonic yearning in Telugu.

The *Bhagavata* is said to draw on and offer a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Given the fact that the *Mahabharata* poets avoided receiving the *Gita* into Telugu, Potana seems to have been attracted to the task of rendering the *Bhagavata* into Telugu and thus offer to augment the *Mahabharata* from outside. He was even thrilled that it was his good fortune that the earlier mighty poets (Nannaya and Tikkana) Teluguized the *purana*s but spared the *Bhagavata* for him.

In his compositions, Potana, too, is guided by the principle of synchronizing the diachronic (and differentiating from even while affiliating himself with the heritage). Potana's creation embodies and responds to the Sanskrit source along with its transformed receptions after its emergence. Thus, while extensively augmenting Vyasa's source, Potana is said to have drawn on the Sanskrit *vyakhyana* of Sridhara (c. 10th century) (Tevappedrumallayya n.d., pp. 13–39).

In Potana's remaking, the source *purana* in the *Bharata* and the *vyakhyana* become the available responsive receptions, which he in turn transformatively rearticulates. As in the case of Nannaya and others, Potana's response too was required to reckon with the Lakshanika inquiries into the essence of the literary. Even as he was immersed in composing his *kavya*, Potana was figuring out the literary reflective mode as the Bhakti affect (*bhakti rasa*). Such an affect can be communicated by means of embodied enactment through performative rendering of the received. No wonder that Potana forged his response in musical reflective mode—for music requires immersive involvement, surpassing the verbal-semantic-figural limits, in the sonic acoustic domain.

8.11 Rhythms of Reception

During the entirety of the second millennium, the Telugu *bhasha* productively confronted the Sanskrit heritage. It is important to note here that all these multi-dexterous poets are equally capable of composing their creations in both the languages; and some of them are said to have composed *kruti*s (a recitational genre) in Sanskrit. But what is crucial to recall is the fact that neither the Sanskrit tradition nor the Telugu literary reflective heritage celebrates the poets from

Nannaya to Viswanatha Satyanarayana for their Sanskrit work. Their internally differentiated devotion to and immersion in Telugu sets apart the Telugu *bhasha* encounter from its counterparts (other *bhasha*s and regions). This encounter expanded and transformed the creative reflective resources of the Telugu language infinitely. Their Teluguizing might give the impression that these writers were domesticating Sanskrit. On the contrary, this very process of Teluguizing is deeply shaped by the resources of Sanskrit heritage—a certain productive morphing of Telugu into Sanskrit and Sanskrit into Telugu was taking place. It is impossible to imagine Telugu out of this mutually transforming embrace with Sanskrit.

The poets discussed so far confronted two major, complex genres of the Sanskrit heritage (*itihasa*, *purana*). We have not yet discussed the multiple Telugizing acts of the *adikavya*—the *Ramayana*—from 14th century onwards. But it can be stated that the renderings of the *Ramayana* can also be examined within the transformative parameters that we are sketching here. In contrast to these *itihasa-purana* poets, Potana's contemporary Srinatha sets himself the task of turning sections of *purana*s and a *kavya* into Telugu. Although he translated selectively from *Skandapurana*, what is of interest to us here is his rendering of the *Naishadhiyacharita* of Sri Harsha (12th century).

Srinatha is profoundly aware that, like the Lakshanikas, Sri Harsha was both a poet and a *shastrakara*; he acknowledges this by referring to Harsha's work. Sri Harsha not only wrote a *kavya* called *Gauda Vijaya* and is renowned as the greatest of poets (*maha kavishvara*) but he also wrote the most argumentative-refutationist magnum opus par excellence—the *Khandanakhandakhadya*—a highly reputed Vedantic composition. In other words, Srinatha confronts a poet-logician-thinker's *kavya*. Although he too renders *Naishadhiyacharita* into Telugu like his predecessors in the tradition (responsive reception, synchronizing diachrony, forging sonic efficacy), what differentiates him from others is that he tries to make explicit his parameters for Telugizing Sri Harsha. Towards the very end of this work, after appropriately praising Sri Harsha, Srinatha states that he particularized Naishadha into Telugu thus: reiterating the sonic force, rendering motifs, concentrating on the sense, nurturing affect (*rasa*), embellishing figures, honouring appropriateness, eschewing the irrelevant and improper, in accord with the source. Thus, I have made this *kavya* known in the Andhrabhasha, declares Srinatha (1956, pp. 314–315).

What is of significance in this passage is that Srinatha is contemporanizing and synchronizing this *kavya* by means of the insights of Lakshanikas regarding the poetic. The conception of *kavya* as exploration of the sonic force, evocation of distinct affect as a composition of most appropriate sonic, lexical, figural and reflective resources (*auchitya*) was the direct effect of Lakshanika inquiries into the literary. Srinatha here alludes to the heritage from Bharata to Kshemendra (11th century). Thus, when the Telugu poets render Sanskrit work into Telugu their concern is never with a discrete, isolated atomic unit as such. They internalize and transform the textured heritage that articulates the instantiation of the specific work.

But the rendering itself is invariably conceived as a reflective, poetic, performative act. As such, this act responds to the literary inquiries that temporally followed the work to be rendered into the *bhasha* domain. Srinatha responds to the plurivocality of the Sanskrit traditions in distinguishing himself as a reflective poet devoted to the Telugu *bhasha*.

8.12 Tending the Untranslatable

The tension of the Sanskrit heritage with regard to the aporia between translatability and non-translatability can be seen to remain in force even with the emergence of the *bhasha* domains. As Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions forge their sonic efficacy in divergent forms and internally differentiate and proliferate in multilingual contexts, the force of inherent heterogeneity turns the foreign (language) redundant and superfluous. But Sanskrit gets appropriated and turned into the foreign by non-Indian languages from the first millennium. Sanskrit evinces a cultivated indifference to such annexations and confronts them when challenges appear within its reflective idiom.[17] Although the *bhasha* domains open

[17] Here one must surely acknowledge (and inquire into) Indological excavations into the foreign "influences" on Sanskrit reflective traditions. David Pingree (Enrica Garzilli, 1996, pp. 105–110), for instance, argues that by the 6th century Indian or Sanskrit mathematical poetry shows the impact of Babylonian and Greek astronomy. He refers to a composition by Varahamihira, where allusions to other traditions can be deciphered; but these allusions can be gathered only through Babylonian cuneiform and Greek papyri data. He suggests that the transmission of Babylonian and Greek knowledge *might* have happened via the Achaemenid Empire. But this does not indicate convincingly that the "texts" of these foreign traditions were actually referred to in Varahamihira; nor, more importantly, whether these Akkadian and Greek texts were ever translated into Sanskrit. More recently, Kim Plofker (2009, p. 42) has this to say: "there is nothing in these similarities [between Mesopotamian and Sanskrit] that necessarily has to be accounted for by transmission, and there are no indisputable traces of transmission such as Akkadian loan-word technical terms in Sanskrit texts". For similar observations about Islamic influence on Indian mathematics, see Plofker (2009, pp. 255–270).

Similarly, Sheldon Pollock (2009, pp. 116–117) refers to a Kashmiri "historiographer, anthologist, and savant" of the 15th century who is said to have partially translated Jami's *Yusuf wa Zulaihka* under the title *Kathakautukam*. He also states that translation occurred from Prakrit to Sanskrit (of a Jaina cosmographical work—*Lokavibhaga* in 5th century). But, as can be seen, one is required to search intensely to seek out such translations—if they can be called such. But, curiously, both these scholars the overwhelming question of the indifference to translation remains unaddressed. Why is it that Sanskrit traditions for nearly two millennia did not undertake any kind of rendering of the foreign works in their distinct forms? That is, why is it that the Sanskrit reflective tradition stayed away from rendering their work into a foreign tongue? Why does such an effort break forth in the Buddhist and Jaina traditions—more particularly and prominently during the Common Era? Can these questions be thought beyond historical, political causalities (as Pollock tries to do when he obsessively pursues the relation between "power" and "culture")? However, one may argue that if responsive reception is the mode of communication of Sanskrit traditions, the latter might have surely used it to incorporate the foreign (be it Babylonian, Greek, Persian or any other ancient civilization). Nothing prevents from such an

themselves up in a major way in the second millennium, Sanskrit seems to remain largely unaffected by these appropriations. Its apparent monolingualism enables it to differentiate and distantiate itself from these manifestations, and turns Sanskrit indifferent to the expansionist temptations or interlingual transferrals.

Although "translation" in a general sense—a sense that is inevitable whenever generally sharable legible symbols are at work—is inescapable, the experience of Sanskrit reflective creative heritage delimits the universal status accorded to Latinate conceptions of translation. It is, however, possible that the hegemonic or pan-linguistic models of translation theory and theological humanist paradigms of thought can subsume the aporteic structure of the untouchable *para* and material finitudinal instantiation of the phenomenal into a theological model. Such subsumption is indeed the violence of translation. For *para* is impossible to access and translate; the absolute foreigner *para* as the undemanding guest and silent witness inhabits the ephemeral instantial abode of the protean host. Although the situation of *para* seems forever to demand translation, that intimation is of a radically different one; it has little to transact with lithic and prosthetic turns.

What the host does with this enigmatic *para* is perhaps the most interminable and indeterminable ("translational") question, which cannot be answered with certainty. For the aporetic structure requires praxial responses, performative modes of being and not linguistic cogitations and meta-theorizations (though they are certainly possible). Since this aporetic juncture constitutes every phenomenal entity, every body and genos—each individuated entity must learn to tend this structure and respond to it singularly.

As every *jati*, genre and *bhasha* is an instantiation of the heterogeneous structure, a symbolic surrogate of the body, each of these is also exposed to the necessity of (at)tending to the foreign within. In this necessary confrontation *bhasha* regions internalize the transformational impulse of the Sanskrit and praxially, performatively differentiate themselves from the plurivocal Sanskrit source. As Sanskrit lives on in these dispersed and disseminated regions, the *bhasha* regions proliferate in their genres, *jati*s and *genos* in every way. Such a radical process of *anusrujana* (re-create) or *vivarta* touches, animates and regenerates every phenomenal domain across all *jatis* and *genos*. There is no definitive terminus to this inescapable *vivarta-transfigurement* of existence.

(Footnote 17 continued)
argument—excepting that the entire excavational work of that kind will have to depend on lithic or archival civilizations—civilizations that have invested in material representational appurtenances of communication. Secondly, such data still would not answer the question of the absence of translational investment in Sanskrit traditions.

8.13 Accursed Contestations

> "Ah, translation is not everyman's skill…. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart. Therefore I hold that no false Christian or factitious spirit can be a decent translator".
>
> Luther, quoted in Berman 1992, p. 31

In contrast to the aporetic relation between translatability and indifference to translation that we confront in the Indic traditions, the German Romantic theory of translation demonstrates a very different epistemic orientation. From the late 18th century the figure of the foreign played a very crucial role in German thought. One can say that translation theory was essentially based on approaches to the foreign. The foreign was seen as an ideal for approximation; a model for emulation; a source of plenitude to fill the lack in one's own self; the foreign circulated as self-generating, autonomous and original entity in itself. The relation to the foreign varied from imitational, identificatory, cannibalistic ("devour" it) and Oedipal approaches.

The ideality of the original and its sovereign existence draws on metaphysical presuppositions and evokes deeply complicitous responses (responses which appear subversive but which turn out to be Oedipal; secular but determined by the religious). Precisely this theological model which governed the mainstream translation theories became the target of critique in Benjamin and his followers. For, Benjamin translation is not striving for "Likeness to the original"—and not an attempt to reproduce the original accurately and authentically.[18] On the

[18] It can be argued that critical European thought is relentlessly involved in re-reading its theological constitution otherwise. The theological constitution of it structured European heritage on the Biblical basis as the divine logos creating form out of formless chaos. Originary formulations are all theologically derived infrastructural categories here. In contrast, the critical intellectuals like Benjamin and Derrida see origin as a repetition—"not as an absolute beginning, nor as a passage from formlessness to form, nor as the result of anything like the intervention of divine logos". Moreover, for Benjamin "origin is an event involving both singularity and repetition". Origin for Benjamin has a double significance: (i) origin as "revelatory as reinstatement" and also "incomplete, unfinished." Origin seeks to repeat, restore, and reinstate something anterior to it which it will never succeed in achieving. But this turns origin into a concept for mourning—and so does translation. Doesn't this mean that the concepts of origin and translation continue to mourn the death of God? Doesn't this also mean that whatever may be the strategies of thought—theological, secularizing the theological, mourning the death of the divine—European thought seems to function only from within the onto-theological framework? The critical intellectual too is decisively governed by the theological past—and hence his attempt to rupture that relation: "Translation thus suggests [in the critical intellectual such as Benjamin and Samuel Weber] a conception of medium that would be very different from that of the transparent interval between two fixed points. Instead of diaphanous transmission and transparency, translation brushes up against a part and in so doing opens itself to the future" (Weber 2008, p. 94).

In Benjamin's rendering (ii) this series of analogies actually suggests an Oedipal relation between the original and what derives from it such as philosophy, translation, history and criticism: "They kill the original, by discovering that the original was already dead". They dismember and de-canonize the original. Once again the thematic of modernity as the death of God, as the overcoming

contrary translation is a desire to do or be the original (paradoxically, the Babelian thematic reaffirms here as well).

Whereas the extensive response to and reception of Sanskrit genres into Telugu *bhasha*, and the renewal and transformation of the received in poetic compositions in Indic traditions provides a contrary experience to the account of translation theory in general and Benjamin's account of the categorical difference between the original and translation in particular. Benjamin demarcates the task of the translator as "distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet's". For the translator's task is seen as interpretative, closer to criticism—the intention of the translator is "derivative, ultimate, ideational",—closer to philosophy, the language of truth. Therefore for him translation is midway between "poetry and doctrine" (Benjamin 1992, pp. 77–78). Such a formulation seems to continue privileging of the original. The task of the translator is to find the intended effect of the original, the production of the "echo of the original" in his language.

Drawing on Benjamin's work and on the deeper currents of European heritage, Samuel Weber identifies two conditions for the possibility of translation: (a) distance from the original and (b) the multiplicity of languages. Both these conditions refer to the Biblical theological formulation of translation. The retributive expulsion from the Garden distances the Shemites from the God and heaven and they make yet another transgressive effort to unite people in one language, and reach heaven through a tower. The God demolishes this edifice and confuses them by multiplying and dispersing languages. The haunting desire of translation therefore is to return to and unify with the origin: translation is an "inevitable, but also an *impossible*—that is, never fully achievable—condition of human existence" (Weber 2008, p. 87, emphasis in the original).

The history and the problematic of translation, in the Abrahamic tradition, were established on the ground, body or corpus of the holy scripture. National languages were fixed, rooted or re-rooted in the very event of the Bible's translation. Whatever else may have affected the structure, argues Derrida (2004b, pp. 64–65), but "something of this essential relation to sacred writing seems to remain ineffaceable in it—and there is nothing accidental in that… [*E*]*very* concept of translation … contains within itself the 'Lutheran' moment" (see also cf. Berman 1992, p. 32).

Whereas Weber reads a particular theological paradigm, by default as it were, to be universal "condition of human existence". The fact that heterogeneity—multiplicity of languages, polyvocal reflective creative traditions and the internally transformative *genos*—of existence can proliferate outside the theological paradigm

(Footnote 18 continued)
of the theological is repeated here. The entire argument of Benjamin that Paul de Man explicates hinges on this fundamental theological imperative. Benjamin rigorously separates the pure language from poetic language; the poetic is the strategy for such disassociation "Reine Sprache, the sacred language, has nothing in common with the poetic language; poetic language does not resemble it, poetic language does not depend on it, poetic language has nothing to do with it. It is within this negative knowledge of its relation to the language of the sacred that poetic language initiates" (cf. De Man 1986, pp. 83–92).

and that the transformative reception of the available can take place beyond and outside the accursed conditions of Babel specified by Weber can be noticed in the Indic mnemocultural scenario (perhaps just one among others). Here through the strategy of synchronizing the diachronic (all the resources of the heritage as always already available) and distancing and demarcating through a generative force, reflective and creative traditions live on variedly and disperse without resistance.

As we have discussed Derrida's relation to lithic heritage from alithic situation in an earlier chapter, it is not out of place to reflect on his take on translation from the mnemocutlural background. Thematizing the theological root of translation, Derrida offers an intriguing reading of the Babel event and theme in his essay "Des Tours de Babel". This reading does not appear to put to practice the critical lesson of deconstruction: the necessity of overturning and displacing the onto-theological heritage—a necessity that Derrida persistently affirmed.

Here, Derrida reads the God's retribution as the primal *deconstructive* act: "God deconstructs". The Shemite desire to impose their tongue on the universe, erect a tower, to reach heaven and unite a common genealogy to make a name for themselves—is seen as "colonial violence" and "linguistic imperialism". In a quick reaction to this political urge, the God strikes the blow and "initiates the deconstruction of the tower, as of the universal language". The retributive blow also at once establishes the law of translation. The God curses, confounds and disperses the Shemites. Derrida's gloss on God's retribution runs: "Then he disseminates the children of Shem, and hence dissemination is deconstruction". The accursed and dispersed are condemned to abide by the law of translation: "Translation becomes the law, duty and debt, but the debt one can no longer discharge" (2007, pp. 195–199).

The debt of translation can never be completely rendered—communication can never become diaphanous for all languages to move through one another without interruptions. Such a desire would once again aspire for the "intact kernel", the wholesome totality which the divine blow has deconstructed. Derrida would persistently deny any such theological wholesome unity and postulate a radical Necessity in its place—a necessity that would erase the intact kernel in the first place. This affirmation of necessity and working out its consequences curiously equivocate Derrida's position between the God's and Shem's actions.

In designating the God's retribution as deconstructive act continuity between divine injunction and deconstruction seems inevitable; but in erasing the intact kernel, God's "total revelation", Jacques Derrida's (2004b, p. 76) necessity (of translation) is in alliance with Shem's transgression. In both ways Derrida's reading of Babel appears to bond him with Oedipus. This bonding is precisely what Patrick Mahony unravels during the "Roundtable on Translation". Derrida responds by saying that this (Mahony's) account does not please him ("only half pleases me"), but he asserts, his work of deconstruction involved more than repeating the Oedipal act (Derrida 1985, p. 110; see pp. 94–110). It is curious that the Roundtable does not turn to Derrida's Babel ("Des Tours Babel"). Derrida's reading and defense reinforce the centrality of the lithic theological roots of the concept and practice of translation.

8.14 The Future Anterior

The conception of language as the God's command or law, transgression as defiance of the God's norm, heterogeneity as the God's retribution and communication (across languages) as the God's punitive law is part of a totally different tectonic episteme than the reflective formations that are at work in the mnemocultures of India. The generative impulse that brings forth biological and cultural formations releases the creative urge of responsive reception which proliferates as genres, *genos* and memories interminably. Every phenomenal form—whether biological or symbolic—is exposed to this recursive force of *vivarta*. Language and "translation", despite their magnitude, are just two specific manifestations of a much more colossal and powerful force of *vivarta*—transformation which is persistently at work in the formations and dissolutions of the phenomenal world called the universe. The experience of existence as a receptive response to the available, what one does with what one is endowed with, transforms the problematic of "translation" and the question of living on beyond the theological framework which continues to dominate "[human] thinking in general"; it intimates one, if one is sensitive to learning, with life and reflection outside Babel, that there is life beyond the accursed zone.

What appears to have received more attention and emphasis in Indic reflective and recitational traditions is really the affirmation of differences—not the confirmation of positivities. In such cultural formations, cultural forms proliferate precisely on the impulse of differentiation—differentiating one from the other, rendering what gets received differently. What comes into being repeats its own coming with variations and (dis)continuities. This enduringly repetitive change does not/cannot promise the presumed movement of the same across two nodes—the alleged source and target.

What comes to exist repeatedly comes forth in an "idiom" (in terms of *genos* in every sense of it). The idiom does not lend itself to change and alteration all that easily. As we tried to show here, for nearly two millennia Sanskrit traditions did not lend themselves to any translational transaction across languages. Yet, what comes to exist (the Vedas, Upanishads, *shastra*) does not remain imprisoned in its idiomatic limits; it lends itself to re-originations, repeated instantiations and transformed re-articulations—in a word, reiterations of the idiom. What comes to exist proliferates through idiomatic heterogeneity. Idioms proliferate without reduction and closure. Cultures of memory move on through responsive receptions of what they are endowed with; cultivated reception of the available enables them to transform and enhance their modes of living on. Such mnemocultural modes of living on mark the limits of lithic heritages of "translation", "criticism" and "comparison".

We have examined in the last few chapters the space of lithic turn in Indic mnemocultural formations. This work as a whole is conceived as a kind of reflective-fictional "mnemocultural response" to the epistemic violence. In other words, as Ion in Plato's dialogue cannot answer or "write back" to Socrates, mnemocultures in a way cannot as such confront and dialogue with the lithic

cultures of Abrahamic tradition. For the epistemic protocols of dialogue are inscribed in the commandments of that tradition. Whereas alithic cultures of memory compose and perform their responses through praxial modes. The hermeneutical translational protocols of lithic traditions can appropriate and represent mnemocultures within their discourses of objectification. Hence, the reflective-fictional status of mnemocultural response in this work—for, this work itself emerges from within the politico-philosophical institution of the university. As birds do not learn to sing from ornithology, mnemocultures do not learn from anthropology to forge their praxial responses. The *jati* cultures of India have little to learn from sociology of caste or ethnography of ritual. As the mnemocultural responsive reception marks the limits of the translation paradigm, this work is also aimed at suggesting the limits of discursive humanities.

The next chapter will focus on yet another moment in the conflict of the archives—between embodied memory and hypomnetized memory. The chapter will show how the hegemonic protocols of reading, once unleashed, institutionalize a model for appropriating creative reflective forms of mnemocultures. The moment and event of our concern will be the renowned 17th century poet-*tattvik* called Vemana. The "new" readings of Vemana, it will be argued, are driven by a cognitive failure to comprehend the relation between *jati* and culture. The cognitive failure itself, as will be shown in the remaining part of this work, is the result of the European epistemic violence unleashed on mnemocultures of India.

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Chapter 9
Listening to the Textlooms of Vemana: Memory, History and the Archives of Betrayal

Abstract Colonialism ruptures mnemocultures through new modes of knowledge production and representation. These new modes displace the embodied and performative practices of recitation and privilege archival accumulation of documented pasts. This chapter shows how a 17th century Telugu poet, Vemana, was turned into an archival object and projected as an underclass rebel. How this colonial legacy continues to dominate readings of Vemana is analyzed in this chapter.

Keywords Vemana · Archive · Telugu literature · C. P. Brown · S. N. Balagangadhara

> In the sphere of ideas, there is hardly yet any realization that we can think effectively only when we think in terms of the indigenous ideas that pulsate in the life and mind of the masses. We condemn the caste system of our country, but we ignore the fact that we who have received Western education constitute a caste more exclusive and intolerant than any of the traditional castes.
>
> Bhattacharya (1984, p. 393)

This work has so far attempted to show how mnemocultural modes persistently and innovatively repeat and structure divergent creative and reflective compositions of Indian cultural formations; as praxial modes they can be realized only in embodying and enacting. No amount of archiving (writing and preservation of documents or artefacts) of this experience can ever become a worthy substitute for this praxial mode of being in the world. From Vedic chants to Alwar or Nayanmar songs, Vachanakaras' utterances to Varkaris' *abhang*s, *bijak*s to *bhajan*s, *purana*s to *prvachana*s, *tattva*s to *kirtana*s, *pada*s to *bar-gita*s, *ghosha* to *bhatima*, the alithic modes of gesture and speech, genres of performance and singing burst forth as embodied practices and immerse everybody that they touch (across all the *jati*s—

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ranging from Chamar to Brahmin, potter to toddy tapper, weaver to sunar, barber to Rajak, Gadab to Gond, Shantal to Savara, Chakma to Kuki, Meetei to Rengma, Lotha to Lucei—all so-called tribes—and countless biocultural formations).

9.1 Archive Fevers

Mnemocultures experientially sense the generative force of memory and desire *as*, *of* and *in*, the body. No wonder such reflective existence has no exclusive value for (derivative) material preservations of the symbolic. As a substitute, prosthetic entity, the symbol (verbal or visual) can bring forth accounts concerning being but these accounts cannot be a measure of being, of the ways of being in the world. Accounts can draw one more and more away from the radical materiality of being—the body complex, from the singular effect of generative forces of memory and desire. Colonialism unleashes this archival passion into the mnemocultural ethos and aims at systemically commanding the latter. This chapter explores into the asymmetric interface between alithic mnemocultures and lithic archival invasions. For the purpose of analysis this chapter focuses on the destinies of the mnemocultural figure called Vemana (a 17th-century Telugu reflective-poet-singer—a *tattvika*).

Vemana's work marks a critical event in the heterogeneous mnemocultural traditions of Telugu language. The significance of this event, however, does not derive, as is often thought, from the fact that his was (one of) the first Telugu works to have entered the print culture. The celebrated fact that C.P. Brown—the East India company archon and architect of Telugu literary history in the epoch of print—translated and published Vemana in 1829 is more a symptom of the crisis of reading than a responsive event.

Brown's own privileged choice was already informed and determined by an ideological formation that was taking shape from late 18th-century European encounters with India. The work claimed to be by Abbe Dubois,[1] which most attracted Brown, contributed to such an ideological formation. At the centre of this formation were two most contentious elements that dominated European reading of Indian cultural formations: "caste" and "religion". In this reckoning, both these "systems" were oppressive and irrational and the authors and beneficiaries of these were Brahmins. In his quest, Dubois projected himself as someone who recognized the oppressed and was bringing to light the suppressed but "revolutionary" (Dubois's word) lower-caste philosophical writers who denounced

[1] Abbe Dubois was a French missionary who spent several years in India in the early decades of the 18th century. What is claimed to be his work, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (Dubois 1906/2001), has subsequently been proved to be a plagiarized work from another French missionary. Brown himself was aware of the dubious nature of Dubois' work. Cf. Schmitthenner (2001, footnote 46, 47, p. 82).

Brahmins.[2] Brown's own contemptuous attitude towards heathen religion and their ignorance surely attracted him towards Vemana from Dubois' list of "revolutionaries". For the patron Brown, Vemana was a "powerful mind searching for the light of truth which is lost in the darkness of heathen ignorance" (Brown 1839/1992, XLII–XLIII). Brown's quests into Telugu letters were said to have been driven by his desire to justify his aversion to Indian religion and beliefs (Schmitthenner 2001, p. 92).[3]

The ideological template that interpreted Indian cultural formations gained its strength through the redoubtable mechanism of information retrieval. A plethora of documents—travel accounts, chronicles, autobiographies, administrative and missionary reports, manuscripts, and scholarly works—converged to create the colossal archive and consolidated the ideologemes of caste and religion (Gelders 2009, pp. 563–589; also, Gelders 2009–2010). A single common factor legitimized their authentic status: they were all considered as documents of observed reality. They were representations of what existed out there really. A sort of mimetic relation between reality and the text of document gets confirmed in this archival quest. Menemocultural textual weaves are forced to serve documentary purpose—to illustrate the truth (say about "caste oppression" or irrationality of ritual) derived from referential reality.

With all the "silly", "stupid" and "utterly worthless" mnemotexts that he was retrieving, Brown was only extending the documentary reading that was already prevalent. For him, they illustrate the heathen blindness. Long before Max Muller openly disparaged at and discarded the modes and ends of learning of a certain tradition as "the twaddle of idiots" (cited in Farmer et al. 2000, p. 6), C.P. Brown has this to say about the mnemocultural traditions of India in the 1820s: "Were we

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[2] This structure of hierarchy with antagonistic categories in European accounts of India finds its basis in post-Renaissance Christian religious conflicts, argues S.N. Balagangadhara. While European search for religion in India emerges from Europe's theologically derived cultural formation, its accounts of "caste system" gets mapped out as a conflict between Catholics (read Brahmins) and Protestants (read the "lower-castes"). Instead of quarrelling about the veracity of such descriptions, Balagangadhara argues, an unravelling of the nature of these accounts gives us possibilities of understanding the culture and its internalized presuppositions which drive it to provide such explanatory accounts about other cultures (which do not build explanatory narratives about the world or reality). Emerging from a systemic and normative cultural background, European accounts aimed at systematizing caste ("caste *system*", like Hinduism, is a product of Europe, argues Balagangadhara). Such European descriptions (turning the other into frames of the same) generated a "colonial consciousness" from which postcolonial intellectuals are yet to free themselves, contends Balagangadhara. One symptomatic instance of this consciousness is the continued stigmatization of caste as oppressive evil (Balagangadhara 2012).

[3] Schmitthenner's own opinion about Vemana, however, simply continues the account projected by Dubois and Brown. Schmitthenner's statement that Vemana had been an intellectual spokesperson for "'un-clean' non-Brahmins … and had consequently been in his opposition to Brahminical religion and authority", is a declaration which shows neither any engagement with Vemana's work nor with what is preposterously maintained in Indological and South Asian studies as "Brahminical Religion". Schmitthenner simply carries on the received wisdom. Schmitthenner (2001, p. 75).

to submit entirely to their guidance we should learn little that is profitable. They [native pundits] exhort us to learn by rote long vocabularies framed in metre; but I rejected these, preferring the European method of study" (quoted in Rao 1963/1988, p. 133, footnote 2).

Indology, the direct descendant of this European method of study, is the cherished archival-archaeological discipline of thought that colonialism implanted, which tried to house these pandit-informants and European investigators. The field of Indology was developed on the cultural labour resources of such native informants. C.P. Brown is eloquent on this native labour reserves: "I discovered some excellent scholars, grammarians and critics, half of whose learning I never attained, living in poverty, mere mendicants; and they were glad to be thus employed [as scribes and informants] on wages as moderate as those we pay our menial servants" (cited in Rao 1963/1988, p. 135, footnote 6). The Brahmin pandits were paid a rupee in four days for transcribing 200 poems—poems collected from manuscripts and "corrected" (cited in Rao 1963/1988, pp. 193–194).

In the context of a compositional tradition which moved with a certain an-archival force, Brown's archival fever and his cherished "European method of study" gradually but decisively became the paradigmatic interpretative model for responding to the Indic mnemotextual inheritances. In this regard, the case of Vemana remains the most eloquent instance of a general kind.

Ever since Brown archived Vemana, Telugu literary scholarship abandoned itself to a dogged pursuit of an authentic Vemana from the archive and longed for the elusive critical edition. Consequently, Vemana is today an entirely institutionalized archival figure. Here, more than mere situational irony is involved in the bemoaning confession of Rallapalli, the celebrated pioneer of Telugu literary (and cultural) criticism (Rallapalli 1928/1945).[4] The Telugus should feel, he wrote in 1928, utterly ashamed of the fact that they still stretch their cadging hands for the generous Brown's alms. For Rallapalli (1928/1945, p. 20), Brown's work on Vemana was of the most precious quality. Rallapalli's declaration keeps getting repeated in every written text on Vemana. It is not the irony of the colonized praising the colonial master that should draw one's attention. (Rallapalli can be an astute critic of the British officials and missionaries.) Such a convention of glorifying the colonial civil servants is still a cherished convention in Andhra. What is ironic is that such an extraordinary multilingual scholar, with more formidable access to Indic mnemotextual traditions than Brown could ever have, Rallapalli should carry forth the violent modes of reading initiated by Brown in his account of Vemana.

It is rather odd that Rallapalli should relegate the authenticity and certainty of Vemana's "thought" to the colonial archive, that he should reduce the force of Vemana to scribal/print productions of texts and editions. Archival anxiety had already possessed Rallapalli: "Unless we examine many manuscripts, collate all the poems, it is difficult to ascertain Vemana's philosophical formulations or

[4] All translations from this Telugu work are mine.

theories [*siddhantalu*]". He goes on to say further that it is a heavy burden to collate, compare and determine the original text of Vemana's poems from the print and manuscript versions of the verses. Telugu literary scholarship has not moved in any significant way the limits set by Rallapalli's colonial reading of Vemana.

N. Gopi, who is credited to have done the most extensive researches on Vemana to date, does little to ease the archival anxieties in dealing with the mnemotexts of Vemana. Although he faults Brown for not attending to the folkloristic origins and oral traditional spread of Vemana's poetry, he is laudatory in narrating Brown's saga. The manuscripts that Brown collected, informs Gopi, looked like thickly knotted tassels. Faced with such a chaos of interpenetrating knots, in order to provide some clarity, Brown had to wage a war on these collections. Gopi's figures of war to describe Brown's archival and editorial work could even justify colonial discourse as a civilizing mission:

> *Chellachedaraina oka arachaka sthitilo unna padyalaku oka vyavastha kalpinchi nyayamurthiga vatikoka 'tirupu' cheppavalasi vachchichindi*
>
> (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 17)

> (As a personification of justice, Brown had to offer his judgement on these anarchically scattered poems. This he did by providing them "a system".)

The tenor and the tone in which Gopi glorifies this "system," takes us much farther from Rallapalli's uneasy, provocative confession about our parasitical lives on Brown's alms. Rallapalli's erudition, inquiring and comprehensive critical reflection, disappear in Gopi's encomium for Brown (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 24):

> *Andhra sahityamlo appatiki apurvamaina paschatya paddhatilo oka shastriya ritiki srikaram chutti ennatiki mugiyaboni parishkarana mahayajnanni prarambhinchadu Brown. [Ee yajna phalame] nirdushtamga veluvadina shreshtamaina pratulu Vemana padyalu.*

> (By inaugurating an unprecedented systematic (scientific) mode of Western method in Andhra literature, Brown began a *maha yagna* [grand ritual] of textual redaction that will never end.)

Needless to say that Gopi does little to meditate on Vemana beyond these archival enframings and mimetic readings. In fact, there is a serious oddity in the very structure of Gopi's argument. Gopi sets out to reclaim Vemana to oral folklore traditions and projects him as a "people's poet". If this were so, why is it that Gopi's work invests so doggedly in archival pursuits? If Gopi aims at demonstrating Vemana's verses to be spontaneous renderings, verses which could not have been written (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 48), verses that nomadically scattered across his wanderings, then why bemoan the absence of a definitive, original text with a beginning and ending? How should one examine the relation between the dispersed recitations of Vemana and the lithic archival appropriation of them?

> *Vemana padyalato vachchina chikkanta avi oka sthiramaina grandhanga labhinchaka povadam; adyanta sahitamaina, oka khachitamaina padya sankhya lekapovatam*
>
> (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 55).

(The real hassle with Vemana's poems is that they are not available as a stable [or definitive] anthology; there is no collection with a definite number of poems with their proper beginning and ending in it.)

Oddly enough, even when this glaring contradiction between cultures of memory and archival passion strikingly comes forth in the context of Vemana, scholars continue to be drawn by the pulls of the colonial archive. The quest for the elusive "authentic" source, out there somewhere in the archive, continues to haunt scholars of Vemana. Another noted scholar, Bangore, who devoted most of his life researching Vemana's work, declares:

Videshi nikshiptalapai drushti sarinchi tavvakapu panulu saginchanide gani Vemana parishodhana oka kolikki vacche tatlu ledu

(Bangore 1839/1992, xvi)

Without turning our focus on foreign collections and until we begin our work of digging (into those archives), research on Vemana is not likely to reach a viable point.

Archive as the repository of legitimate truths, archive as the authorizing source of the real, actual, archive as the only source of knowledge production determines and regulates the colonial paradigm of reading, which continues to govern (not only) Vemana studies.

9.2 Textlooms

If archival passions unleashed the feverish hunt for manuscripts and their centralization in newer institutions in the 18th and 19th centuries, the related impetus for historical understanding pervaded European response to Indic mnemotextual inheritances. The dominant concept of history only reiterated a linear relation between presupposed context and the presumed imports of the text. The text often in this relation is determined by the context. This unexamined concept of context often circulates in a chain of substitutes such as time, place, biological provenance, language, family etc. In this linearist response, questions such as how a composition relates to a context, if an empirical context can exhaust the possibilities of the text, if texts can be little more than passive reflections of their contexts, if texts can transform conceptions of contexts, or if contexts can be exhaustively determined—hardly receive attention. The text is often forced to enact a mimetic relation to its supposed context.

Such mimetic conceptions of history or context often yielded frustrating results and disparagement among scholars faced with Indic mnemotexts. Text after text was scanned for documentary clues, for referential indices that would indicate the relay between the context and text. Yet, such formidable resistance from mnemotexts nowhere seemed to have persuaded scholars to rethink the very tools and methods of their response. Even to this day we hardly come across Indological scholarship re-examining its own paradigm of reading beyond the mimetic bind between text and history/context. Colonialism institutionalized such dogmatic

reading protocols in a context where reflective and creative compositions emerged outside the mimetic logic. But within a generation the colonial consciousness allured the minds of a minority in the colonized world and perpetuated itself internally thereafter.

Drawing on the standard dogmatic opposition between history and myth, Rallapalli, for instance, laments the absence of both external and internal resources to write history in India. History is one of the peculiar (*vichitramaina*) knowledges that we have acquired due to our "cohabitation" (*sahavasamu*) with the British, argues Rallapalli (1928/1945, p. 22). Lithic inscriptions and documentary archival repositories are the external resources Rallapalli is referring to here. Whereas the resources internally available in a text can at the most raise a hunch, there is no text which can provide strong referential evidence, he complains (1928/1945, p. 25). Although Rallapalli discounts his own ability to write historically, his entire work on Vemana is devoted to offering a speculative historical, but surely genetic linear, account of Vemana and his context. A glance at the lecture sessions that he offered reveals the genetic architectonic of Rallipalli's reading: Vemana's time and country; Vemana's family situation and orientation; religious ethos of Vemana's time; Vemana's yogic state; Vemana's religious preaching; and others like Vemana. Thus, throughout Rallapalli's work, the referentially given, the speculatively surmised, is taken as the source for reading Vemana's compositions. Vemana, in this reckoning, survived the travails of family bonds and binds, experienced the joys and sorrows of life, then moved with yogis, learnt alchemy, became a yogi himself and eventually experienced the bliss of *advaita* (non-duality) and achieved his emancipation (Rallapalli 1928/1945, pp. 107–109). In every instance, Rallapalli draws on Vemana's verses as documentary sources to sustain this linear genetic account.

If Rallapalli bemoaned the lack of resources for writing historical accounts, Gopi (1980/2005, p. viii) goes ahead to declare that our real problem is that we do not even have a proper history:

> *Asalu chikkanta manaku sariyaina charitra* [sic] *lekapovadamlone vundi*

Like Rallapalli, Gopi's account too deploys his verses as documents reflecting the social situation of Vemana's times. Despite his concerted effort to impose referential status to Vemana's verses, Gopi (1980/2005, pp. 72–73) cannot help confessing:

> *kani mana duradrushtamemo gani Vemana padyalalo charitra telipe kilakamaina padyalevi nirvivadaspadamga vundavu*
>
> (It is probably our ill luck that none of the crucial poems of Vemana which indicate historical reference is beyond dispute.)

Therefore, Gopi himself sets out to provide a sketchy dynastic historical account of the period. The lack of referential resources in dealing with Vemana is covered up here, typically, by drawing on Christian missionary accounts and information concerning caste, religion and ritual activities. Here, Gopi relies heavily on Abbe Dubois' contested account of the early 19th century. For Gopi,

despite the absence of undisputed evidence, Vemana sought his poetic themes mainly from his contemporary times and the essence of Vemana's poetry can be found only in these themes. These themes are none other than the ideologemes of caste and religion whose understanding Gopi seeks essentially from missionary accounts. Such thematization has been so internalized by the time of Rallapalli, it is no surprise when Gopi (1980/2005, p. 180) writes about Vemana:

> *Varna vyavastha loni amanushatvam ataniki [Vemana] badhanu kaliginchindi. Kulam jati aikyatanu bhanga parustundani hechharinchadu*

> (The inhuman nature of the varna system pained Vemana. He warned that caste will disrupt national unity.)

Could Vemana ever have thought of *jati* as nation at all? Is there anything remotely connected to this theme of "integration" or "unity" (*aikyata*) in his poetry? Above all, could Vemana ever think of *jati* as a *system* (*varna vyavastha*)? Is there anything in his eminently aphoristic and non-narrative poems that sustains these claims? As we will see, what we are witnessing here is a symptomatic reading frame instituted by colonial consciousness that regulates Gopi's "reading" of Vemana.

Nurtured on the missionary animus, Gopi attempts to represent Vemana as a champion of a caste-less society, economic equality, fighting social oppression—all the typical themes symptomatic of colonial reformism. In his struggle for a "humanist society", Gopi argues, Vemana found the "caste system" the foremost obstacle. Since poetry is believed to propagate poet's convictions, Gopi feels, the "people's poet" Vemana spread the message of "humanism" in his work. Gopi does not consider Vemana's verses to be particularly anti-Brahminical; yet, in his attempt to acclaim Vemana as a universalist, rational-humanist from the lower caste, Gopi's reading is certainly inflected by the general ideological enframing of caste and religion prevalent in European response. Vemana could only have come from a peasant family, insists Gopi. He argues that when the Western missionaries and scholars in a unified voice proclaimed that Brahmins opposed Vemana, "there is no need to doubt their integrity and impartiality" (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 192). Gopi thinks that Rallapalli too felt pained by Vemana's criticism of Brahmins and as a result Rallapalli "closed the door on Vemana's poems" (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 212).

Whatever polemical differences Gopi wished to maintain with Rallapalli, Gopi's reading conforms in every respect to Rallapalli's. Yet, it is important to note that both these works on Vemana betray the irresolvable tension (between mnemocultural and archival accounts) in repeating the received documentary readings of the textual tradition. These critics do not pause to examine whether Vemana's own work offers any reflective resources to respond to this tension.

If Gopi hoped to reclaim Vemana for an underclass self-representation of society, Rallapalli sought to figure him not as a founder of any *mata*[5] as such but only an effective propagator of the immemorially prevailing “Hindu” *advaita*:

Adiyanadiga Hinduvulalo nundu advaitamatamu

(Gopi 1980/2005, p. 4)[6]

In response, Gopi (1980/2005, p. 156) goes on to appropriate Vemana towards Veerashaiva and Lokayata *mata*s. Caught (differently) within the paradigm of European response, these two critics hoped to offer the most proper interpretation by first capturing Vemana’s reflective system (*mata siddhantamu*). But both were functioning from within the framework of religion and caste established by colonial modernity. Yet, as in the case of Gopi’s work, Rallapalli’s account of Vemana too cannot escape a tension between contrary impulses. After devoting the entire series of lectures for a “historical”, referentialist commentary, almost towards the end of the book, Rallapalli sets out to offer his own “theory” of poetry.

In his theoretical account of poetry, Rallapalli considers poetry as an experiential articulation of feelings in language.[7] He identifies five fundamental elements (*pancha mahabhutamulu*) as essential for poetry. These are: “the agent of experience, the feeling, the object of feeling, effective language of articulation and a competent audience”. Although these five factors are required for poetic composition, Rallapalli narrows down on two of them as the most essential elements: these are *bhavamu* and *bhasha* (feelings/felt experiences and language). Unlike moral and philosophical treatises which are devoid of *bhava*, for poetry feelings are the life forces, theorizes Rallapalli. What is rather odd about this “theory”, which suddenly appears in the concluding pages of his book (Gopi 1980/2005, pp. 144–150), is that nowhere does this take into account the two central features of the paradigmatic European response which so far governed his own commentary: history and the real. How does his theory account for them?

Further, it is indeed strange that a commentary that cherishes such an immanentist conception of poetry should so doggedly hope to build a commentary on the basis of entirely extraneous factors. If the immanentist *bhava*s are the life force of poetry what difference did they make in the context of Vemana’s reception of the tradition? On the contrary, if the referential, historical elements are central forces of knowledge—(as *tarka* spread across every field of learning in the epoch

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5 *Mata* should not to be confused with religion. Before the spread of colonial consciousness it invariably referred to a reflective-ritual position, such as Shankaramata, Madhvamata, Kapaalikamata etc.

6 As can be seen, by Rallapalli’s time the national-cultural term Hindu, a term without historical or reflective depth and without any provenance in Sanskrit traditions, gets internalized. He never turns to inquire what is *Hindu* about *advaita* or even Vemana. Colonial consciousness as a reactive formation already takes root here.

7 In the light of our earlier discussions about the literary and literary inquiries, this conception clearly shows the epistemic rupture. Rallapalli’s conception is already touched by the (British) Romantic ideas of poetry.

of Sanskrit, so does history pervade every domain today, argues Rallapalli)—what is their epistemic status in the context of Indic mnemocultural texts, on the other? What is their space in Rallapalli's own conception of poetry? Rallapalli does not attend to this fissure which his commentary contains. Given the irresolvable nature of this contradiction in Rallapalli's *Vemana*, one can only notice the ironic ring of his concluding remarks on interpretation of poetry:

> *Idivaraku kavitvamediyanu charcha vachchinapudu manamu samskruta panditula sulochanamulu vesikoniye chuchi nirnayinchuchuntimi. Ippudingleeshu vari durbhinito chuchuchunnamu. Varedi kavitvamaniro manamu nadiye kavitvamanuchunnamu. Kadannadi kadanuchunnamu.* ***Ante kani mana yanubhavamunu manamu nammi siddhantamu cheyuchundaledu***
>
> (Gopi 1980/2005, p. 163, emphasis added)

> (Earlier when there was a debate about what is poetry, we used to wear the glasses of Sanskrit pandits and decide. Today we perceive through the magnifying glasses of the British. Whatever the latter declare as poetry, we are only confirming it; whenever they deny the status of poetry to something, we too are repeating the same. **That's all what we have done. But we never try to trust our own experience and drawing on it proceed to offer our own theory**.)

This confession discloses a graphic illustration of colonial consciousness. But that is the question: why is it that these profoundly concerned commentators on Vemana, Rallapalli and Gopi, neither drew on Vemana's own "experience" and from their own exposure to Vemana to offer any reflective observations? Why is it Vemana's own radical experience of the impossible and his struggle with that experience had no effective intimations to offer these important scholars? Why is it that the wandering *jati* composers and performers from Rayalaseema region, who to this day go around singing Vemana, have little to communicate to these literary-cultural critics? Why is it that his own considerable competence in musical traditions did not turn Rallapalli to reflect on the poetic-musical sources of Telugu culture in offering his account on Vemana? As could be noticed in Rallapalli's confession, colonial consciousness confounds and stigmatizes what one lives with: the immemorial inheritances of the colonized. Does Vemana offer resources for forging a "mnemocultural response?"

9.3 Mnemotextual Weaves/Aphoristic Energies

Woven in the textures of the body mnemotexts move *on* memories. They drift across all kinds of contextual determinations—even as they manifest in specific contexts. Vemana is a significant heir to such a mnemocultural inheritance in the Telugu language; he indeed appears as an exemplary detour in this inheritance. The most striking feature of his compositional or recitational unit is that it is radically non-narrative. It is a verse form that can drift from one theme to another, one figure to another, without letting this drift across heterogeneous motifs to sublimate into a narrative order. When one attends closely to the compositional

structure of the most repeated verse form, and the myriad ways in which he weaves the thematics of desire, memory, body, repetition and emancipation—one cannot help noticing the interpretative violence of readings that have imposed speculative narrative orders on Vemana's poems.

Unlike the other poets in the Telugu literary tradition, whose work consists of multiple stanzaic forms, Vemana's poetic weave favors predominantly one specific stanza form called *Ataveladi*. Often reduced to standard formalist metrical scansions, Vemana's use of this form attracted no special attention. It was only treated as a more flexible formulaic compositional form. Considered as a composition of poetic difference, *Ataveladi* also signifies two striking features of movement and transgression. Both these features, implied by the term, are figured by the female dancer (*nartaki*) and courtesan ("tart").

Is it entirely fortuitous that such a master weaver of the themes of desire, body—especially the gendered, sexual body—and freedom, as Vemana should choose this compositional figure for his mnemotext? Apart from the compositional flexibility this verse form permits—in Vemana's recitations it circulated as the most elliptical, aphoristic, tropological composition. Elliptical juxtaposition of apparently unrelated and analogically deployed tropes and motifs pervade this mnemocultural weave. The rhetorical contrasts and confirmations they signify cannot be developed into an evolving narrative; they are seminally non-narrative in their force. Take the analogical reasoning that braids the apparently unrelated orders of truth in the following poem:

kalla nijamu rendu kalakanthuderugunu
niru pallamergu nijamuganu[8]

(Only Shiva would know truth from falsity; [as] water alone truly knows the slopes.)

The divine order where god alone knows both truth and falsity is elliptically, without any linking grammatical category, paired here with the natural order where only water knows the slopes in the landscape. This analogical reasoning does not necessarily imply that nature and the divine are of the same order; nor does it suggest that one grows from the other. These elliptically paired utterances only emphasize uncertainty of any objective knowledge of truth. This uncertainty is shockingly aggravated in the sudden tendentious declaration of the third elliptically juxtaposed epigram:

tanayuni jananambu talli danerugunu

(The mother alone knows the source of her son's birth.)

The implicit sense of betrayal and infidelity can be said to take blatantly misogynous proportions in Vemana's verses. It is, however too hasty and

[8] Given that this chapter aims at a risking mnemotextual response, any available anthology (not a "critical edition") can be used to cite Vemana's verses. Among the various anthologies used here, the one from which verses are cited largely is *Vemana Padya Ratnakaramu* (Vemana 1976/2005, p. 669).

premature to condemn Vemana as a misogynist. For Vemana's aphorism here can only be an allusion to a venerated Upanishadic source where the mother alone is believed to know the truth of origins of her son (*Chandogya Upanishad* 1997, p. 138). We shall return to this theme later.

What is important to note here is that the most basic compositional unit of aphoristic utterance, as we learnt in the context of the non-narrative verses of the *Panchatantra*, can radically work across contexts, situations, demarcated domains and delimited motifs. The elliptical line can work in conjunction analogically with other rhetorical figurations or move with a contrasting intensity. Vemana's verses burst forth in *contretemps*, out of time, an-archically and an-achronistically, as tropological performatives of truth. There is no objective, masterable, thetic status to truth or knowledge of freedom in Vemana. The aphoristic rhetorical declarations amplify these nomadic, drifting reflections. Even Rallapalli who is so committed to impose a linear genealogical account on Vemana could not avoid noticing this *citational* structure of Vemana's mnemotexts:

> *Vemana padyamulalo pekkintiki deni padamu deni katikinchinanu achu gani andamu gani chedadu*
>
> (Rallapalli 1928/1945, p. 44)

> (In most of Vemana's poems, even when one conjoins one verse unit from one chain with another verse line, neither the beauty nor the imprint of the poem gets spoilt.)[9]

Similarly attempting to tether Vemana to some rural innocence, Gopi abstracts/extracts a hundred aphoristic lines from Vemana's verses. Although Gopi (1980/2005, pp. 236–39) catalogues the aphorisms as folk adages, he does not thematize the power of these mnemotextual fragments to transgress contexts and their capacity to obscure or suspend origins.[10]

There have been frantic efforts to identify the addressee of Vemana, to determine the subject of the refrain either as the psychobiographical, historical, referential Vemana himself, or an ideological being such as humanist, or a spokesperson for the underclass, or a rational dialectical man etc. But the rhetorical, aphoristic form of these verses defies such reductions. What is essential for this compositional form of apostrophe is the fiction of the other's face, indeed, the "ear of the other", the fiction of the listening other (*vinara* Vema).

This figure of the listening other cannot be reduced to an empirical referent whether it is the historical or legendary Vemana or Abhirama. What needs to be

[9] Although this observation is made available in a marginal footnote of Rallapalli's work, in his main text he freely indulges in this citational or grafting activity. But, instead of thematizing the larger implications of these allusive, elliptical citational features of Vemana's compositions, Rallapalli offers a functional justification of his activity. It is only for convenience's sake that he has done the cutting and pasting of poetic lines, says Rallapalli (1928/1945, p. 44): "*kavuna atlu anukulamu koraku marchabadinadi*".

[10] In his anxiety to fix their contextual provenance, Gopi tries to pursue the ideological binary between the pandit and the peasant and in the process fails to listen to the larger epistemic questioning that Vemana's verses initiate.

noticed is that the emergence and proliferation of these aphoristic verses are made possible by this rhetorical but absent or fictional listening figure. The figure does not and cannot answer back but provides the condition for an aphoristic response. The apostrophic figure of silence with an ear is the fundamental structural condition for mnemotextual compositions. For the listening other does not answer back, but praxially articulates his/her mode of being; the listening other gains action knowledge from what s/he is exposed to. This fictive addressee enables Vemana to weave his most radical, rhetorical epistemic questions and move beyond them to reflect on the urge for freedom.

9.4 Forming Names

The significance of these compositions does not depend on the identification of either this addressee or the proper text of the verses, if there can ever be one. Vemana's singularity lies in the most inventive reiteration of the available forms of response. There can be neither any closure nor definable continuity to such mnemotextual responses.

Despite or because of ill-thought fulminations against Sanskrit tradition, it is necessary here to affirm that the entire rhetoric and the most crucial tropes of inside/outside (*bayala/lopala*), outside-in, of repetition, the body, freedom etc., that texture Vemana's compositions are all intimately nurtured within but as a response to the Sanskrit reflective traditions. It is also, however, important to add that Vemana's response does *not* simply repeat or negate the given. In his own singular fulgurations, Vemana turns the epistemic intimations against its own representational manifestations and obsessive patterns. Even though Vemana can be said to embody a sort of vigilant passivity, in his reception of the epistemic intimations, his tirade against sedimented patterns or modes of being that do not struggle and respond to the intimations of freedom is most vociferous and without parallel (at least in Telugu).

Perhaps, one could argue that one is encountering in this play of the contrary forces the most primordial and immemorial and irresolvable tension between the body and the symbol. Vemana's textlooms expose us to this fundamental tension that we must learn to live/deal with. The symbol form—the indeterminable moment it erupts in and from the body which Vemana calls name (*nama*) and form or figure (*rupa*)—forever plays the contradictory double role with the body. The symbol, at once is intimate, absolutely touched, termed and shaped by the body, emerges as an enigmatic detour of the body itself; it is also at the same time an irreducible alien in and of the body. The symbol, in its prosthetic extension of the body, supplements and promises the body an afterlife—a sort of transcendence.

But in this play of the body and the symbol—the symbol can arrogate for itself the status of a surrogate body and from this symbolic body of codes and practices, the symbolic begins to bind the bodies both the primal and the supplemental in its own codes and practices, in its own names and figures. That is, the symbol that the

body has created not only gains power over the body but also over what it (symbol itself) exponentially generates (as names and forms of heritage). Drawing on the resources and the resistances of the body itself (its work of hand and face), the power of the symbol always appropriates the body's responses to its supplementation.

It is in the context of this powerful rather untimely aporetic event of the intimate-alien cross-hatching of the body and symbol that one must begin the task of sensing the singularities of cultural response to the event of general force. Drawing on the event of Vemana's mnemocultural compositions one can risk the observation that wherever cultural responses emphasize the outside, the alien, as the prosthetic, and supplemental exclusively at the cost of the body and its intimations and wherever these forces of the symbol are garnered to consolidate codes and institutions—the symbolic lends itself to a violence over the body, albeit a sort of secondary violence (the primary uncoded violence is associated with the primal union of the body and symbol and the body's response to the enigmatic *para*). Conversely, wherever responses appear to incline more towards the body, the intimate, proximate inside, they seek to nurture the symbolic in alliance with the body and foreclose or resist the total (possible) dissociation of the symbolic and the body. Consequently, these latter responses *appear* to lack the capacity to reflect on the surrogate symbolic body in isolation from the primal body with which it is in alliance. (Plato's Ion can only perform but can't alienate himself from it to abstract the essence of performance.) The lithic and alithic cultural orientations can be grasped in these preferences.

9.5 Desiring Bodies

The continued irony of European "burden" or European "responsibility" of representing all those who cannot represent themselves, developing all those who cannot sustain their own development is that every such "concerned" work—from the plethora of funded monographs, field work reports, books, every such work that claims to bestow agency to the other, facilitate their own representation—ends up reinforcing and consolidating the externalizing archive and the violating episteme. These modes of projecting responses and responsibility merely repeat a decision already in place—a "decision" to resolve the aporetic relation between the body and symbol by mastering the symbol and archiving it. This itself is a desire for a sort of double mastery. If the symbol seeks to master the body, then the mastering and containing of the symbol through the surrogate bodies and institutions is the second form of mastery that the mnemotechniques of the archive hope to achieve. The aporetic event will have to be thought/enacted again and again—for there can be no closure to this aporia as long as bodies are entangled with the symbol. And it is rather illusory to seek the body bereft of the symbol.

In groping for singularities of response to the aporetic event one can begin by asking the most basic questions: How does Vemana configure the body in his

compositions? How does the "body" receive or respond to the intimate-alien (symbol) in Vemana's response to Indic mnemocultural heritage?

The body is the most persistent trope in Vemana's verses. It must be noted that this is not only the gendered body but it is also the non-human body that Vemana meditates on. He devotes several verses to the animal that gets expended for the satiation of carnivo-ritual desire of the so-called human. The enigma of the body is aggravated by the forces of desire and memory that compose and haunt the body. No wonder the body evokes a deeply ambivalent response in Vemana. The question of freedom seems to hinge on the ambivalent, contrapuntal, understanding of the body both as necessary and redundant. In a poignant aphoristic announcement, Vemana (1976/2005, p. 647) warns about the finitude of the body:

Tommidi krantala tithiki
nimmagu sommulunu kulamu netiki jepuma
nammaku nadani dehamu

(Why decorate this leather sack of nine holes with wholesome jewels and castes? Do not believe that this is yours.)

Often, the body gets figured as an ephemeral container, either a fragile pot or a delicate transparent glass (*gaju kuppe*). But the body is also an abode of the most accomplished perceptual senses which have specified functions. The utterance (function of the organs of voice) seeks proper organs, hands long to give away gifts (*dana*), feet seek distances to traverse, the rear seeks proper release, and the sexual organs long for consummation of the desire.

Yet, this epistemically configured body of perceptual and functional senses (*indriya*s) is in itself incomplete and yet prone to a sort of relentless repetition. This originary mechanism of *indriya*s brings forth and breathes life into the body and maintains, or abandons the body to repetition. Left to themselves the *indriya*s and the body they compose are like the machine—forever repeating themselves. Desire as repetition characterizes this machine. Vemana identifies two major manifestations of desire in the context of the body. The two concrete forms in which desire repeats itself are those of economic greed and erotic urge. He condemns the miser who deprives the hand of its ethos-endowed essential function, of *giving*.[11] The giver, the donor (*data*) receives high praise—and the greedy miser the worst reproach from Vemana (1976/2005, pp. 32, 34, 55, 129, 162; II 30, 48, 53, 69, 86, 157, 287). In one of his aphorisms, he compares the greedy with buzzing houseflies that hover about a dirty vessel:

muriki bhandamandu musuru nigala bhangi (1976/2005, p. 3).

Of all givings, sharing food is the supreme *dana* for Vemana.[12] This giving will discontinuously affect one's own memory, body and deeds in their repeated

[11] Among various compositions that reiterate the work and limits of the *indriya*s and the composition of the body in the Sanskrit reflective traditions, cf. *Samkhyakarika* by Isvarakrishna (1996).

[12] I have also used C.P. Brown's collection for citing poems (Brown 1839/1992, p. 8).

manifestations. Neither space nor time should determine the giving, says Vemana. The work of hand—giving—must go on. Those who prevent the hand in its work and defer giving cannot fail to have its effects: they cannot hope to have a future that they can continue to desire for (1976/2005, p. 43). The time of giving and the time of its effects, Vemana would say, are neither continuous nor can they be calculated; that is, the relation between endowments and cultivation remains incalculable. It could be argued that Vemana considered giving to be the supreme manifestation of economic desire—and commended this act of the body.

In Vemana, the most paradigmatic and irrepressible form in which desire manifests is figured as the erotic urge. It condemns the body to the machine. It turns the body against itself and effaces the difference between life and death. In Vemana's compositions, people who condemn their bodies to such desire-driven machines are treated as idiots, the wretched and the base. Their body-machine, caught in the routine of repeating the same, cannot experience the incalculable freedom.

The body in Vemana is an incomplete entity, which is given to repetition compulsion. The supreme desire that compulsively returns in the body and obviates its possibility of freedom is often figured as the desire for another body—the woman's body. It is possible to fault Vemana for representing woman as the object of desire, as a body exposed to male gaze (his verses are explicit in their specification of the desired body parts). What needs emphasis here, however, is that more than reducing woman to an object of gratification, Vemana deploys the figure to insist on the necessary task of moving beyond the repetition compulsion and thus experiencing freedom. The figure of woman in his meditations on erotic desire seems to expose more the compulsion to repeat carried on by the male body than to reduce woman to a sex object. This is not, however, to suggest that Vemana kept woman free of sex traps. On the contrary, he is most vociferous and unsparing in his condemnation of woman who combines the ruse of erotic desire with economic greed. The ubiquitous term for such a woman, which he uses unhesitatingly in his verses, is "bitch" (*lanje*). Vemana's verses in this regard attract condemnation as misogynic (1976/2005, p. 37).

The figure of woman, however, seems to set the most formidable limit to all kinds of resistance to repetition. All sorts of symbolic defences—in the forms of yoga, millions of rituals, religious shelters—defences often erected by the performing male suffer defeat at this ultimate resistance (to freedom) figured as woman. Vemana exposes precisely this drama of the debacle of the symbol in the compulsion to repeat:

> *Yoni juchi parama yogambu maracheru…*
> *Yoni padupu juchite…koti pujalella gollabovu*
>
> (1976/2005, p. 18)
>
> (They forget even the ultimate yoga, the moment they see a vagina
> Even ten million *puja*s [rituals] go shallow the moment a chance with a vagina appears.)

Then, does it mean that Vemana is concerned only with the freedom of his implicit male addressee? It is true that the invisible or absent addressee of

Vemana's verses appears to be a male listener. Yet, in Vemana it is the repetitive structure of the body, especially woman's body, which is invoked to *resist* or *delimit* the symbolic—especially in contexts where the symbolic is sought to mark a discriminating difference among the bodies. Take the tendentious aphorism that invokes the genealogy of mothers to unsettle the fundamental mark of distinguishing a male genealogy:

Talliganna talli tana talli pina talli
tandri ganna talli tata talli
ella shudrulairi eti brahmanudika

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 325)

(If mother's mother and one's own mother, one's aunt and the mother that birthed the father, and the grandfather's mother, if all of these are Shudras, whence comes this Brahmin?)

Given that the Brahmin symbolic order maintains the distinction among sexes by disallowing women certain ritual symbolic privileges by means of which Brahmin males are authorized to perform certain rituals—Vemana here questions the very status of the male Brahmin symbolic identity by invoking the erased genealogy of woman's body. Given that every mother is disallowed the Brahmin symbolic order—which makes her "low" caste, then, pounces Vemana, how does this Brahmin come about? How can the discontinuity of woman's body provide continuity to a male symbolic order, or, how does continuity of the excluded woman (as the Shudra) enable the distintictions of the genealogical order, Vemana seems to ask.

In a similar provocative vein, once again bringing together the resisting body and the demarcating symbolic order, Vemana asks (1976/2005, p. 14):

Janana maranamulanu sandhya tradunuledu
sandhya tradu ledu jananikepudu
talli shudruralu tanetlu bapadau?

(Neither at birth nor in death there is the crepuscular thread; no such thread to mother forever; if the mother is Shudra, how can he be a Brahmin?)

Probably it would be difficult to find a more disturbing exposure of misogynic element of tradition than Vemana's in Telugu mnemotexts. His critique forged in the figure of woman (mother and wife), once again foregrounds woman's body to challenge the symbolic smokescreens:

Ali ranku delpa akhila yajnammulu
talliranku telpa taddinamulu
kani teraku karma kanda kalpitamaye

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 124)

(All the sacrificial rituals are after all only to suspect wife; all anniversary rituals to suspect mother's secrets; and in the end the ritual regimen is fabricated (to rationalize)).

The woman's body, as figured in the above aphorisms, here marks the limits of a symbolic order. It is precisely from these margins that Vemana invokes this body to question the continuity of the symbolic order that maintains silence about the

marginal body's symbolic status. It is from outside this symbolic order that the woman's body enables the continuity of the order. The logic of such continuity gets exposed in Vemana's aphorisms.

Dazzled by the vehemence of Vemana's critique, certain critics, in an ill-conceived and ill-thought polemical move, tend to celebrate it as a Shudra challenging Brahminical hegemony and as fighting for a casteless society. They reduce him to their own ill-thought partisanal caste wars. Vemana's poetic weaving was conceived and textured entirely in the epistemic resources that he inherited. Vemana's singular response to what he received must be explored at the epistemic level.

9.6 The Intimate Alien

The body in general, not just woman's body, is a mechanism of repetition. This repetition machine resists anything that breaches this order of repetition. Any breaching disturbs the technicity of repetition—at least temporarily until the effect of the breach is contained by the mechanism of repetition, until the machine gains control. But the memories of breaches, the possible—even if ephemeral—crises these mark on the body, the traces of the breaches, can be gathered to resist this compulsive machine. When such gathering of breaching memories does not occur, the body cannot make any difference between life and death. Birth and death will have the same status—expressions of a compulsion to repeat.

Vemana's verses embody two distinct kinds of response to this compulsive structure of the body and its organs, senses and its functions. The first response, focusing on the ephemeral nature of the body, reduces the body to a leather bag with holes, a cesspit, a urine sack and a fragile container that one ought not to long for. But both this sense of disgust and the knowledge of the body's ephemerality, Vemana suggests, can be no barriers to the repeated manifestation of desire for the body. Vemana is acutely aware that this repetitive structure has relayed itself over millennia.

The traversal of life forms across epochs has to pass through a million and odd varied shapes before gaining the human shape, observes Vemana (Brown 1839/1992, p. 31). Vemana's received term for this relentless relay of the life forms—their births and deaths—is *samsara*. *Samsara* is the most acutely felt experience of the inexorable structure of repetition in Indic (Sanskrit) episteme. Desire and the body are seen to be the forces of this relay structure. Responding to the epistemic intimations, Vemana is aware that mere temporal cessation of the empirical body cannot promise any freedom, however disgusting the body might be. Such emergences and cessations are merely states of dream and sleep (*swapna sushuptuvulu*)—denying any lucidity of awareness, says Vemana. The promise of freedom after the cessation of the empirical body in the world does not attract Vemana's attention much. Any doctrine that makes such claims in the world is only pandering to falsehood, says Vemana (1976/2005, p. 506):

Ihamu vidichi phalamu limpuga galavani
mahini baluku vari matamu kalla

(All the credo of those who utter that the fruit of the hereafter are wholesome and attractive is just false.)

The body in the world is finite. There is no easy escape from its repetitive structure. Therefore, Vemana contemplates and announces another mode of dealing with the ineluctable structure of the body and its repetition. The repetitive structure of desire, memory and body can be breached only when this ephemeral and incomplete complex is supplemented with an alien that can come to inhabit the body. This alien inside the body is not *of* the body as such—that is, it is not a product of the body nor does it have any material phenomenal status that the organs of the body have. As the force without a shape or substance, it is also without origin or end and it can neither be reduced to the organs and operations of the body nor can it be characterized by the structure of repetition.

Only those that are born and are of substance and shape are exposed to repetition and death. The fictive trope of the alien circulates in the body as an outside-in—that is, the alien which being inside the body has the status of being outside it. Further the alien inhabitant has no agentive status, it is no sovereign self, which can proclaim mastery over the body as such. The alien in the body is a *weak*, an-agentive force. The singular, epistemically sanctioned term by which this alien gets designated in Vemana is none other than *para*, which pervades Sanskrit reflective traditions. Within the homogeneous and repetitive structure of the body *para* marks an alien difference within the abode of the same.

In Vemana's textloom the oft-repeated word—the singular term that ought to enable one to become aware of the radical difference and distance between the mechanism of repetition and the alien outside-in—is *eruka* (to learn, to be aware, to know). However colloquial and "regionalist" this word and its synonyms are (and it has quite a few substitutes in Vemana: *telusu*, *kanugoni*, *telivi*), this is a deeply epistemically marked notion concerning freedom.

Vemana's verses are replete with the intimations of this structure of the alien-outside-in body that we discussed in earlier chapters. The question of freedom comes forth only when the distance and difference between the body and the *para* are maintained. But that is the most difficult lesson to learn to practice or embody. For, the moment the human body sees *para*, it forgets itself; but the moment it turns towards itself, the body forgets *para.* How can the human learn to know that other and itself—asks Vemana:

Ninnu jucheneni tannu ta marachunu
tannu jucheneni ninnu marachu
e vidhamuga janudu erugu ninnunu dannu

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 2)

(The body that learns to see the differential relation can witness *para* as the lamp that shines in the cleansed or refurbished lantern.)

Gaju kuppe lona kaduguchu dipambu
ettulundu jnana mattulundu
telicinatti vari dehambulandula

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 2)

(In the bodies of those who are *aware*, *jnana* is like the lamp in the cleansed lantern.)

The one who is aware like the shining lamp knows the difference of the alien-*para*. This awareness is called *jnana*.[13] But this awareness by itself is incapable of maintaining or letting the body see its differential status. Freedom is contingent upon the body learning to see this or live with or embody this difference. There can be no derivation or application of the awareness of *jnana*.

Tanaloni velugu taneringi
yunna manavunaku nonaranga muktira

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 50)

(The human who learns to be aware of the light within the body can gain freedom, says Vemana.)

Vemana's persistent appeal to the invisible and silent listener often is about the humans who, caught in the compulsive repetitive structure of *samsara*, disregard this lesson about difference and distinction. Consequently, Vemana announces with agony and frustration, they are condemned to the machine of repetition:

tanuvu dananukonu tanu vasana dagili
janana maranamulanu jikki jikki
polupunonderugaka porladu chundeti
bhranti jivi keti paramu Vema

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 53)

(Assuming that one is just one's own body, and touched by one's desire, caught in the births and deaths again and again, rolling in the routine without respite, how can there be *para* for such a deluded being?)

Vemana's agonized cry about such spectral beings in these verses often is: How can there be freedom for such *jana/genos*?

Janulaketlu moksha sangati siddhinchu…
mattulaku ledu mukti mahilo Vema
(there can be no freedom to such intoxicated beings in the world,)
manavunaku mukti ledu mahilo Vema
(such human has no freedom.[14])

(Brown 1839/1992, pp. 354, 359)

[13] The term *jnana* seems to be the Sanskrit cognate of the English "knowledge"—though none of the major dictionaries extends their etymological sources of this word beyond the usual Middle or Old English origins (*cnawan*). But this Old English term can, perhaps, be traced back on its Indo-European chain to the Greek *gno*, as in *gignoskein*, and to the Sanskrit *jna*.

[14] Incidentally, there is no need to emphasize the fact and principle of freedom that Vemana appeals to here—as in the case of other experiential terms (such as *jnana, para, guna*, etc.); they emerge entirely in the idiom of the epistemic learning of Sanskrit reflective traditions, which Vemana invokes and disseminates in his verses.

Here it must be noted that only when the trope of the alien-*para* comes to constitutively cohabit with-in the body that the generative impulse or repetitive compulsion, that is, manifestations and cessations of the body become possible. In a way the repetitive recurrence of erotic urge for the body, which Vemana captures so substantially in the figure of desired body of woman, is only a derivative simulacral manifestation of the primal cohabiting or inhabiting of the body with *para*. Every body in the universe is believed to emerge from this primal pairing. No wonder Vemana captured this derivative proliferation of simulacral effects in the forms of procreation, death and returns.

Whether primal or simulacral, the body in this figuration appears to be a gratificatory entity; but this experience of consummated gratification can turn into a machine and displace or defer forever the question of freedom. Although it is the most difficult and rarest experience, learning to experience the differential structure of the body and *para* itself is the ultimate promise and enjoyment of freedom, proclaims Vemana. Such a joy of freedom cannot be reduced to the derivative gratification hankered after by the simulacral bodily senses:

Chevulu gorunu manchi jilibilipatala
tiyyani matala teraguvinaga
chermambu gorunu saravi toduta shita
mrudula samsparsha sampadalanepudu
kannulu gorunu kamaniya varnambu
lainatti rupambulanuvutoda
naluka gorunu nayamu toduta tipi
yogaru karammu cheduppu pulusu
mukku gorunu sadgandhamulanu jelagi
chevulu charmambu kannulu jihvamukku
ninniyunu gudinatuvanti yillu roci
tannu ganugoni sukhiyimpa dagunu Vema

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 30)

(The ear seeks lilting rhythms and delighting words, the skin wishes soft warmth and wealth of delicate touch; the eyes long for beautiful colours and attractive forms; the tongue waits for the contrary tastes of sweet, hot, salty, sour and *vagaru* (astringent); and the nose seeks the fragrance of sandalwood. Yet, repulsing all these, the house composed of these raging delights of varied senses, one must discover or discern that other-inside and seek consummation, proclaims Vemana.)

The most coveted delights sought by the senses are tantalizing. One must recognize, insists Vemana, that that other-inside is everywhere, inhabiting every body in the open. What is outside inhabiting the other body is the very structure that comes into one's own body. Only those who learn to experience such a structure of the outside-in can hope to experience the promise of freedom, announces Vemana. As pointed out earlier, Vemana repeatedly affirms that this other-in structure must be learnt *in* the world:

Brahmamanaga vere paradeshamuna ledu
brahmamanaga tane battabayalu
tannu tanerigina tane po Brahmambu

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 436)

(What is called the Brahman is in no foreign country; that Brahman is oneself in the open; if only one knows about oneself—Brahman is little more than oneself.)

But for Vemana the only supreme and (im)possible lesson to learn is this differential structure inhabiting the body. Vemana does not subordinate this lesson to any other transcendental, otherworldly deity. No otherworldly myth offers the kind of delight that could be experienced from this epistemic learning. In the above aphorism he resoundingly announces: Para does not reside a foreign country. The other proper-common substitutes for this term are *eshwara, atma, tanu* (that-other-thine), *tattva* (that thou/that there), etc. Vemana's mnemotexts are woven with this entire range of reflective idioms. Therefore, that brahman-alien-*para* is no controlling sovereign divine master from another world but very much the other residing in the body in the open (as in every other body). Since this supreme difference inhabits the body, the body itself can be likened to a "temple":

Gudi deha matma devudu

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 160)

(The body is the temple and *para* the deity.)

Further, the body itself is the pot of brahman—the container that is open to the outside; the air that it breathes is life and the pair of eyes is akin to the friendly moon. Given this structure of the body there isn't any other divine on the earth, proclaims Vemana (Brown 1839/1992, pp. 158–165). Vemana's aphoristic verses repeatedly affirm that such a temple, or delicate container, must learn to live this differential and subtly gratifying relation. The inside must forever remain hospitable to the alien-*para*. It is only the compulsive repetition of desire, greed and concupiscence that rush to efface the difference through possessiveness and sexual urge; they plunge to absorb the other into the same. Such bodies can only communicate hostility, frustration and other sources of dis-ease that perpetually reduce the body to the machine. When that difference is effaced, the body turns against itself, for every body is also raging with the same desire.

9.7 Touching Freedom

For Vemana, cultivation of the experience of the irreducible difference within the spectral body is of the highest human task. Further, Vemana ferociously resists any attempt to reduce this (im)possible experience to any structures—even if they are traditionally cherished ones. Such a radical experience of the difference of the non-figurable non-representable *para* is beyond the organs and operations of the body. The body can only be touched by it, the body can only have experience of it and the body can only obliquely embody and live it. But the body cannot externalize or exemplify it, hope to archive it and reduce it to alienating structures of representation. Vemana even calls this experience a "secret learning" or "invisible learning" (*gupta vidya*). Surely Vemana had a taste for this secret:

Itti kanula brahmamettu judaga vachchu
juchu kanulu veru chupu veru
chupu lona manchi chudanga valuvada

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 251)

(How can one see the Brahman with these eyes? The seeing eyes are different and the sight different. Shouldn't one incline towards the sight in seeing?)

These viewing organs of perception are different from the "seeing" beyond the senses within the body. Therefore, asks Vemana, shouldn't one turn in this peculiar non-organal seeing to experience the alien-*para*? And such impossible promise of experience does not get sublimated in generating simulacral bodies of knowledge in Vemana. No wonder mnemocultres filiate the *anubhava* and *jnana* rather than "faith and knowledge", as in the case of the cultures of the archive.[15] No wonder the an-archival mnemotexts are often found to be empty, without proper narrative (or even semantic) content (what is the content of the Vedas? What is the content of Vemana's aphorisms?) Here, therefore, there is no question of mastery of knowledge and sovereignty of the knowing self; for the promise of experience of *jnana* is beyond all calculations and measures emerging from within the interstices of the machine of repetition, which eludes its approximations or expropriations.

Vemana is furious and acerbic whenever and wherever the promise of freedom and the delight of experience are tethered to the already determined, calculated and formulated. Vemana's tempered and passionate fulminations against all sorts of sanctioned, already assumed and thus already closed declarations can be made sense only when one reads them as deeply embodied epistemic response to the calculated compulsions to repeat and guard the unexamined. No wonder every such sedimented structure and relation as caste, doctrines, custodians of tradition, teachers, women, temples, idols, food, education and knowledge—just everything that is structured after the sedimented symbolic—can escape his onslaught. Once again one would notice that all those that receive his fulgurational blitz are, little more than the patterned effects of the machine. They are all part of the *apara* learning that we discussed in an earlier chapter.

Vemana's blinding insight does not spare the self-possessed custodians of the epistemic learning—especially when they cannot themselves learn to experience and enact the intimations of that lesson. They are the targets of his most tendentiously demystifying attack when the sanctioned custodians are controlled by the exhibitions of the machine, when they are entrapped in the *apara* learning:

Vena velu cheri verrikukkalvale
arthahina veda marachuchundru
kantha shosha kante kaligedi phalamemi

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 50)

[15] Here, the obvious reference is to Derrida's reading of Abrahamic religions in his essay "Faith and Knowledge" (Derrida 1996).

(Like the mad dogs, thousands gather to bark the meaningless Veda;
What's the fruit of this except the exhaustion of one's throat?)

Verri kukkalvale Vedamul jadiveru
ashayambu lerugarayyavarlu

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 124)

(Like the mad dogs, they recite the Vedas,
they know not the ends, these *acharya*s.)

Similarly, Vemana proclaims that he should pronounce all the six *shastra*s and *purana*s to be little more than diseases. For Vemana this tradition-legitimized Vedas are all crazy if one does not learn to learn about the alien-*para* (*tannu*—that you) from them. In contrast to such sterile repetitions of the privileged and sanctioned, Vemana claims to have learnt the essence of these inheritances:

Vedasaramanta Vemana yerugunu

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 124)

(Vemana knows the essence of the entire Veda.)

The essence of the reflective traditions here cannot be conflated with either the circulating custodians or reduced to its routine representations. All learning and rituals are utterly futile for Vemana if they do not nurture the experience and if they have no taste for the secret lesson. No amount of education can equal that immeasurable experience, says Vemana:

Svanubhuti leka shastra vasanalache
samshayambu chedadu sadhakunaku

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 17)

(Without one's own experience, with only smattering knowledge of the *shastra*s, no practitioner can dispel doubt.)

The practitioner, the *sadhaka*-performer (the indeterminable addressee of Sanskrit reflective traditions that we discussed earlier), cannot hope to overcome doubt by preoccupying himself with *shastra*s. The repeatedly pursued studies of *shastra*s have only increased argumentation, but have not bestowed any *jnana* in the body:

Taruchu chaduvu chaduva tarka vadame gani
divyajnanamunaku tetapadadu.

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 325)

(Mere reading and more reading will only lead to argufication; no splendour of *jnana* gets clarified.)

Therefore, what cannot be substituted or supplemented by anything is the (im)possible experience—*anubhuti*. For such a person, even the legitimate deeds and cognitions of the body, its prescribed ritual acts and repeated mantras—all these can be suspended:

Manasu vakku karma mariyemi lekanu
Raka poka gani rajavidhi
Paraga hani galade paratattva yogiki

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 62)

(Even without the mood, word and deed, without the to and fro of the royal path, can there be any harm to the yogi who experiences *para*?)

karma jnanamulanu vidu nirmalunaku kalugu mukti nijamuga Vema
(Brown 1839/1992, p. 57)

(Freedom will really accrue to the one without the foul heart, even when he abandons knowledge of deeds.)

Dharma karmamulanu datuta muktira
(Brown 1839/1992, p. 57)

(Freedom is moving beyond dharma and deed.)

What we witness in these irrepressible aphoristic testimonials is the acute awareness that every *mata*, every caste, whether Brahminical or non-Brahminical, is exposed to the relentless logic of the machine:

manasulona nunna matamulanniyu roci
(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 226)

(Repulsing all the creeds of the heart…)

matamulenni yaina satamuga nundavu
(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 188)

(*Mata*s may be countless but they are never stable.)

Unable to experience the secret lesson, the humans who create diverse *mata*s are like the agitated dog caught in the house of mirrors, says Vemana.

In Vemana's compositions the family, religion, caste forms are all only established modes of determining, marking, and binding the individual. Although Vemana's verses seem to alert the individual to these varied determinations, he also seems to concede that every frame, at every level seems to release and bind the individual at the same time. The family and *jati/kula* absorb the individual into their ritual and verbal bonds. Vemana expects that the frame of *mata* and its elevated level would release the individual from *jati* binds. But to his agony and frustration, he recognizes with utter perspicacity that none of these frames can promise the freedom that the more primal epistemic lesson intimates him with. If only, Vemana repeats, one can learn to experience it (Brown 1839/1992, p. 156):

Jangamaina pidapa jati nenchaga radu
(After turning into a *jangama*, one can no longer count on *jati*)

declares Vemana regarding the Shaivite doctrinal-ritual sub-sect that was believed to release one from the caste determinations. Further, he makes his conviction more obvious by claiming that

Matamu batti jati manakunta korantha

(The reflective position must prevent one from succumbing to the caste bonds.)

Yet, asks Vemana, after moving into the *mata* that promises liberation from the older bonds if one were to repeat only *jati*-acts and *jati* response what is the use of the *mata*?

Jati tone yunna nitulela?

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 157)

(Why counsel virtues when one remains within *jati*?)

Sensitive to the reassertion of the patterns through what turned out to be only false exits Vemana announces: just abandon both *jati* and *mata* and become a yogi:

Jati matamu vidichaina yogi ga melu

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 474)

For, the yogi is one possible figure of promise in Vemana who would passively experience the differential *para* in the material body of the organs and operations. The yogi would not lend himself to the surrogate body of the symbol—his passive performance itself is a testimony to the resistance to and the being of the symbolic. He remains incalculable. He will remain outside-into all kinds of bodily acts and utterances that his body exposes him to. No determined *mata* can give Vemana the temperance that the experience promises:

Matamulenni yaina satamuga nundavu
satamuganu yundu jagati nokati

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 188)

(None of the innumerable *mata*s remains agreeable; only one will remain agreeable in the entire universe.)

And that singular experience beyond all *mata*s which can be nurtured will be that of *para*.

9.8 Epistemic Intimations

Against the promise of this experience everything that is sanctioned by the tradition can be dispensed with (as *apara*). The most singular achievement of Vemana's work can be grasped in his reception of the epistemic intimations. The promise of this incalculable experience is open to everyone beyond all received frames. No determined name or form, group or doctrine can have a privileged claim on the promise of this experience. Vemana excoriates all those who turn it into their property.

Vemana questions the logical certainty of the symbolic that is claimed to ensure the Brahmin identity. We noticed that Vemana questions this through the figure of displaced woman. Vemana is incisive in unravelling the sedimented symbolic structures through which the Brahmin tries to protect his distinction from the others—including his mother. Vemana declares that no Brahmin can escape his *Shudratva* (Shudrahood) by such means:

Shudrulandu butti Shudrula dushinchi
dvijula manedi peru nijamu jesi
manasu nilpa kunna mari Shudrudadhamundu.

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 154)

(Born among the Shudras, blaming Shudras, and thus proving the name of the Brahmin, if they can't steady their moods, they remain the lowest of the Shudras.)

No symbolic ritual or naming can assure the Brahmin his distinction. He can sink farther below the so-called Shudras. No one can bask in what has supposedly been given, the endowment. None of the external paraphernalia can guard the received claims.

Medanu tradunu vrechi meraputo
dviju daune?

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 155)

(Can one be a twice-born, just by adorning a thread around the neck?)

Yet, the perpetuation of symbolic determinations is itself the result of body's compulsive repetitions. The memory and marks of breachings, assimilated into the patterns of repetition, imperceptibly, discontinuously affect the machine, points out Vemana:

Manuja karma cheta maladayye

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 164)

Of the human deeds that one became a Mala (*jati*).

Madige gunamunna mari dvijudagunaya

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 164)

(With the attributes of the Madiga (*jati*—caste) can he become the twice born? [Or, alternatively] with the required attributes Madiga too can become a twice born.)

The two durationally received terms—*karma* and *guna*—are the transgenerational traits of repetition that structure the body and its return. Any change in the structure of these traits and their effects on the body remain contingent on the fundamental necessity of learning to recognize and nurture the experience of difference. When this infinite task of persistent practice or performance is denied or ignored, the traits transgenerationally reinforce the machine across and beyond the empirical bodies. As can be seen here, with all his sharp attack on the sham life of designated *jati*s, Vemana's performances do not abandon the *jati*-cognitive reflections.

Vemana implicitly works within the epistemic understanding that the empirical, the given symbolic states of *jati* are the effects of the body's derivative law of repetition. No wonder, the Brahmin bears the brunt of Vemana's ire against the reified repetition of the surrogate symbolic body. For Vemana puts to work the received and valorized status of the Brahmin as the one who has the privileged access to the secret, hidden, learning:

Vemana subverts the received status of this specific group by questioning its access to such awareness. How can one claim the status of a Brahmin without such awareness, asks Vemana.

Brahmanula matandru
Brahmatva madi leni
(Brahmya maddi leni brahmanudate)

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 45)

(How can they claim to be Brahmins, without the *Brahmatva*? How can one be a Brahmin without the touch of *Brahmatva*?)

Brahma vettalamani paurushamaderu
Brahmamanaga dani bhavamemi?

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 437)

(Presumptuous, you claim to be possessors of brahman; then, explain, what does brahman mean?)

Here, one can point out that the figure of Brahmin occupies the same position with regard to the secret learning as the figure of woman with regard to the erotic urge. It is not fortuitous that both these figures are concerned, in these verses, with the question of experience. Yet, both these figures have turned out to be only spectral entities condemned to repeating only the received codes and acts. No wonder that these figures suffer such violent exposure in Vemana's general unravelling of the symbolic. But both these figures must be seen more as sources for bringing forth and emphasizing the most essential intimations of the culture: the experience of the (im)possible promise of freedom and its intimately complicitous relation to the machinic repetition. Impervious to these deeper and complex textures of Vemana's weaving, critics often celebrated or condemned him as a partisan in caste wars. These ideological skirmishes fail to respond to the more challenging meditations of Vemana and have utterly disregarded the more generalizable infinite task of learning about ends of experience that his aphorisms singularly embody and perform.

The sedimented symbols and structures cannot guarantee the learning or awareness that Vemana considers as indispensable promise. The second, crucial move after this inversion of the received relation is to effectively displace it. Vemana aims at precisely such a move. Given that the promise of freedom that Vemana meditates on has the radical aim of moving beyond the calculative compulsive structures of repetition, this promise cannot be once again measured by or confined to the already determined, decided structures of representation. Therefore, this promise neither emerges nor can be reduced to any specific symbolic or ritual framework or group. Every body and any body who struggles to cultivate the experience of difference can learn to experience the promise—proclaims Vemana. For every body carries the structure of difference, every body hosts the alien-*para* within:

Malavani nela mari mari nindimpa
nodala rakta mamsa mokati gade
vanilona melagu vani kulambeddi?

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 129)

(Why blame again and again the Mala? Isn't the flesh and blood in the body of all the same? Then, what is the *kula* of the *one* [*para*] who moves in that body?)

Can the received identity markers trap that alien-other into their frames? Can that alien-other be reduced to a particular *jati*, questions Vemana. No received identity can remain valorized in Vemana:

Jatulandu migula ye jati yekkuvo
yeruka leka tiruga nemi phalamu
yeruka yaina vade hechchaina kulajudu.

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 39)

(What's the use of going on without knowing which *jati* is higher? Only the one who learns the difference remains the nobler of the *kula*.)

Jati veru leka janma kramamuna
nemmadini yabhavuni nilpeneni
nakhilajanula nella natadu ghanudaya.

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 322)

(Disregarding *jati* in the series of births, if only one could discern the other in the heart, that one alone is the most accomplished among the universe of *jana* [*genos*]).

The promise of freedom, the learning about difference, can be accomplished within the relentless structure of repetition. No *jati* can be kept away from this learning; also, every *jati* must move beyond all kinds of symbolic guardrails of *jati*. As this learning is not based on knowledge or sanctioned status everyone is exposed to the challenge of this infinite task. Here there is no use for hierarchy of groups:

Kulamu hechchu taggu godavalato pani ledu.

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 265)

(There is no hassle with the high and low *kula* status [here]).

9.9 The Sacrificial Carnivore

The infinite task that Vemana repeatedly invokes is a common one, open to everybody. Given the general force of the task initiated here one is tempted to ask: is it only a *human* task? Is it the task or burden of the human to yearn for the promise of freedom? Is it an entirely human burden to question, circularly authorizing and legitimizing one's own questions? In the ultimate analysis, is Vemana advancing a human or even a humanist task (as Gopi claimed)?

Vemana is one of the rare poet-bards who has devoted some very poignant aphorisms exposing the carnivo-sacrificial murderous practices of humans. For him every body always already is exposed to this machine but structured with an

alien inhabiting the machine. And any body that has this double—calculative and incalculable—structure is exposed to the promise of freedom. One only needs to learn to experience this promise and sustain that experience. Impervious to this general structure of the body, the humans obliterate the other bodies for either the gratification of a lofty outside or for the satiation of a taste inside. Every attempt to obliterate the differential structure of another (in the) body, Vemana suggests, perpetuates one's own spectral repetitions. Despite the lofty claims about sacrificial rituals, such acts of desire simply deprive one of the coveted liberation, warns Vemana:

Jivi jivi jampi jiviki bettanga
jivi tanu balisi chelaguchundu
jivahimsakulaku jikkuna mokshambu.

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 273)

(A living being kills another to feed another; thus the being moves around fattened; can those who torture life ever gain freedom?)

One's own freedom from the structure of repetition cannot be achieved by obliterating structures of life, declares Vemana. Such deeds only fatten the desiring machine. Incidentally, *jivi* is yet another reflective epistemic term for the alien-other. It also suggests here the life forms—the obliterating and the obliterated. But each of these life forms also has within it the alien-*jivi-para* trace. The promise of freedom sought at the expense of others' life forms can only reinforce the calculative mechanisms, result in a calculated, determined freedom. Once again, Vemana here is addressing the question of how to live with the other who/which is not the same or how to live with difference. Vemana hints at an incalculable freedom which is accessible to every body who discerns how to live with the other who is unlike us.

But does Vemana consider the human (male usually) the more privileged of all life forms, for he is the one who seems to long for freedom? Or, in whose name the yearning for freedom is addressed? Is this capacity to learn the peculiar ability of the human, or is it an expression of human sovereignty? Vemana works from within the received reflective ritual significatory world. He does weave his own compositions with the marked resources of this world. He is acutely sensitive to the demarcations and hierarchies that this world maintains among human communities and between them and other life forms. Some time his own compositions simply repeat these codes and appear to conform to them symptomatically the simple fact that, for example, in order to undermine the received superior status of Brahmins, Vemana calls them Shudras:

Talli shudruralu tanetlu bapadau…
Manasu nilpakunna mari Shudrudadhamundu
(When mother is a Shudra how can the son become a Brahmin?…When one fails to steady the discerning sense [the Brahmin will be] lower than a Shudra.)

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 164)

This gesture, polemical in essence, only confirms the categories of the *jati*-formation. Similarly however much he may declaim against the animal sacrifice, and meat eating, Vemana freely uses the received inferior attributes of animals to characterize degenerate humans. The dog is the blighted animal that is brought into refer to Brahmins. Similarly, the human birth is regarded as a boon that one receives as a result of one's commendable deeds across a very diverse range of hierearchized life forms, says Vemana.

Yet, it is difficult to see in Vemana's meditations any valorization of the human as the agent of decisions and as the master of the process called life. On the contrary, he seems to deny this urge to claim sovereignty among humans vehemently:

Janana maranamulaku sarisvatantrudu gadu
modalu karta gadu tudanu gadu
naduma karta nanuta nagubatu gadako.

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 14)

(He asks:
One has no sovereignty over birth or death
One is never an agent at the beginning or end
Then, isn't it laughable to claim agency in the middle?)

The middle here is the ephemeral, finite spectral existence which Vemana once thought as the state of dream or sleep. Further, given that Vemana treats the compulsive, repetitive structure of *samsara* as the relay and repetition of trans-generational occurrences, no individual can ever have a decisive, agentive, authorizing, or authoring status here. The traversing traits of *guna* and *karma* from immemorial traces that compel the body cannot be under the control of a self-willing, decision-making male. Nor can the insubstantial, non-representable alien-*para* claim, or be attributed, a status of masterful agency.

It must be pointed out that Vemana's compositions are not regulated by any ipsocratic urge. *Para* and ipse form incomparable differential nodes that set apart Sanskrit and European reflective traditions. Working responsively within the received space and weaving his compositions, Vemana cannot have erected a humanist sovereign self. There is no aggressively active agent in complete self-control who can put an end to the compulsion to repeat and determine the nature of freedom. But then who does Vemana sing for? Who is the one who is expected to learn to experience this promise of freedom? Who is Vemana's addressee?

Vemana often uses the indicative, reflexive pronoun *tanu/taanu*—passive pronoun of reference. This pronoun suggests both the body complex and its alien-*para*; this also has the status of a possessive, one can refer to oneself as *that* or the *other* (in the third person). That is, the passive body that shelters the non-agentive *para* within must learn to nurture their differential structure, differential relationship of host and guest. In this learning experience, the alien-*para* will only function as a passive witness (*sakshi*). Without being agents, these differential

entities must abide by their difference and complicity. The experience of freedom which this learning promises can no longer be reduced to representational, symbolic structures.

9.10 Dis-Figurations

As in the case of the *Mahabharata,* which we have examined earlier, Vemana too can exhibit no exemplary figure who has accomplished such freedom. For, such an experience is non-representable; or, rather, "one" does not reduce it to either the symbolic or ritual structure, visual or verbal formation. Thousands of Vemana's oft-repeated aphorisms only appeal to the silent, rhetorical figure in varied tones and tempers the necessity and challenge of the infinite task; but they do not offer a referent or *telos* of what can be accomplished by that task. It is a task whose effects are to be experientially embodied and enacted, not celebrated and symbolized. Vemana is so immersed in these epistemic intimations that he even goes to the extent of recommending the erasure of the very fundamental sources of symbolization—the sign forces of name and form:

Rupu peru rendu rudhi to galigina
peru rupu kriyanu penaci yundu
nama rupamulanu nashamonduta melu.

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 54)

(When the name and form are firmly in place, these two remain tangled with act/deed. Therefore, it is better that these name and figure are extinguished.)

This erasure of the symbolic as the dynamic of external action and representations remains the ultimate response of the mnemocultural experience. Vemana's aphorisms embody this resistance to knowledge, action and representation. Consequently, they cannot be said to privilege or represent a sovereign subject of this experience.

It might appear preposterous in the context of such a prolific composer who has woven poems on just any and every situation—and thousands of his verses remain dispersed in circulation—to argue that mnemocultures resist the symbolic. As we discussed earlier with regard to lithic turns (orthotic, iconic, and narrative), one cannot hope to claim that mnemocultures can escape the symbolic; even if they were to offer the lesson about resistance, they cannot have possibly escaped the symbolic. Yet, they implicitly point to the asymptotic relation between the experiential or praxial learning and prosthetic knowledge.

The extraordinary proliferation of mnemocultures (song forms, the countless simulacral emergences and drift of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *purana*s, etc.) remains testimony to this complicity of the body and the symbol. What mnemocultures seem to declare in a million acts is not the possibility of cleansing or immunizing the body from the symbol. On the contrary, these an-archival cultures of memory seem to affirm the imperative of learning to live with the

irreducible difference of the symbol as a detour of the body itself. That is, the (im)possibility of the body's living on beyond the complicity between the body and symbol. Although mnemocultures, in their proliferation and drift beyond the determined unities of time and space, are not unaware of the compulsive moment and traversal of the symbol, they do not invest in the cultivation of the symbol's total drift away from the body. They do not seem to valorize the consolidation of symbol without the body into a centralized, surrogate, substitute body, which can only aggravate the distance and difference between the body and the symbol.

Vemana composed his apparently heterogeneous verses within the epistemically formed, singularly articulated mnemocultures of India. He firmly believed in the promise of a freedom and the absolute necessity of tending and nurturing of the body to experience this freedom. In his numerous questionings, he bracketed attempts to coerce the body to achieve this freedom. He breached another path—that of non-coercive tending of the desires for another kind of learning:

Asanamula banni yangambu bigiyinchi
yodalu viruchu konedu yogamella
jettisamukanna chintakutakkuva.

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 159)

(With all the physical regimen, controlling the body parts, torsioning the body in the name of yoga—all such body-exercises of the wrestler body are more trivial than the tamarind leaf.)

He proclaimed to the world that the joy of the experience of freedom couldn't be derived from an externalized, abstracted surrogate body of knowledge which he often described as *chaduvu* and *vraata* (reading and writing: the world of hympomnemata):

Adhika sukshmamaina yananda merugaka
matiyu leka chadivi magnudayye
nati rahasyamella najanuderugunaa?

(Brown 1839/1992, p. 92)

(Unaware of the most subtle joy, engrossed in mindless reading, how can such a being know the most secretive secret?)

Sakala shastramulu jadiviyu vrasiyu
teliyagalaru chavu teliya leru
chavu teliya leni chaduvulavelara?

(Vemana 1976/2005, p. 622)

(They read and write all the *shastra*s and learn, but cannot know death. What is all that reading for, which does not make us aware of death?)

Neither the subtle joy nor the enigma of death can be learned from the exteriorized and distanced bodies of knowledge and writing. How can anyone who mindlessly runs after these un-affective, un-touching bodies and gets drowned in them, ever enjoy the subtle and secret experience, asks Vemana. What is the use of such pursuits when they cannot impart the experience of the ends? Why get lost in

the dense forests of letters out there when what needs to be done is to learn to live with the differential structure of the body?

> *Aksharapu tadavin jorabadi*
>
> (Vemana 1976/2005, p. 291)
>
> (Penetrating the dense but endless forest [why not experience the difference and learn to utter the name of that alien-other within, asks Vemana].)

The body will only have to reiterate, recite and perform this ultimate or primal difference and the body must only learn to utter the sign-force of that difference. Vemana's verses reiterate this deeply an-archival impulse of mnemocultures in emphasizing the body's infinite task. Vemana seeks to indicate even the beneficiary of such an experience and task that he composed in his countless symbolic recitations—his verses. The silent addressee (not an empirical one) is above all the one who gathers *jnana* (*jnana sankalitudu*) and does not betray it. It is for such a discerning and experiencing seeker that he has uttered or recited thousands of his verses which are, Vemana specifies, inaccessible to writing:

> *Vratakandani padyamul vela sankhya*
> *Vemana cheppe bhuvini*
>
> (Brown 1839/1992, p. 118)
>
> (Thousands of poems that can't be grasped in writing, Vemana uttered in the world.)

No wonder the addressee, like the mnemopraxial addressee of the *Mahabharata*, will never answer, confirm, explain or deny Vemana's infinite task. But such explanatory accounts remain of little use for the seeker who aims at putting to work his existence as the only mode of being. One only will have to negotiate the forms of betrayal.

Can figuring out this task in writing this work, after being exposed to such enactments of learning, deny my own complicity with a certain kind of betrayal in undertaking this work? Ironies of colonial consciousness continue to haunt our postcolonial modes of being.

Betrayal indeed might be the term one can reuse for the kind of archival passions evinced by Rallapalli and Gopi (among many others) in responding to Vemana. The demands and determinations of the archive regulated their betrayals in compelling them to contain the an-archival impulse of Vemana into a genetic-linear narrative, long for a monolithic standard anthology. Their betrayal, subordinated the singularity of the Vemana event to the authorizing sovereign archival longings. There is no easy way out of these longings and betrayals. The event of Vemana, however, keeps the mnemocultural promise of the infinite task open. Can any body, everybody (can) take it? The mnemopraxial intimations remain—beyond the archives of betrayal.

Every instantiation of the generative force, that is, every *body*, in its tending of itself needs to be sensitive to such a re-turning of desire—a desire to exteriorize memory and archive it. Living on in an indeterminable dramatization and enactment of the aporia between the intimation to suspend the generative impulse and the (possibility of the) reiteration of the generative impulse in every singular

instantiation of the force, mnemocultures proliferate. In mnemocultures there can be no normative way of enacting this aporia. That is, there is no single sublimated or valorized mode of being in the world. Where there is norm there the aporia (between living and freedom) weakens, for norm demands obligation. Emerging from outside the theo-normative episteme, mnemocultural responses proliferate heterogeneous modes of being, non-normative ways of going about in the world. In their singular enactment or embodiment the relation to the aporetic of generativity, mnemocultres unleash genos and genres; they bring forth biological and symbolic forms of being; in effect, they reiterate the generative force even when they sense the need to suspend the impulse.

In order to configure the *differentia specifica* of Indian cultural formations we have been tracking mnemocultural currents in this work. These currents, as they responsively receive the available, disperse embodied and enacted memories at large. Internally differentiating in idiom and existence from what one receives or inherits, heterogeneous communities proliferate responsively and spread across.

The absolute media for such dispersal remains the differentially marked body in these cultural formations. Biocultural formations—called *jati*s—are the guardians of memory in Indian cultural traditions. As contended earlier, colonial modernity ruptures the relation between *jati* and culture by stigmatizing and recoding them in accord with lithic theo-cultural protocols. As we move towards the conclusion, the next chapter while offering a close up on biocultural formations affirms the need to responsively rearticulate these inheritances; the need to reinvigorate the inheritances is advanced as a necessity if we wish to reorient our work in the humanities today. What is at stake in our destitute postcolonial scenario is precisely the destinies of discarded and denigrated biocultural formations of our existence. The next chapter will move towards *critical humanities*.

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Chapter 10
Close-Ups: Approaching Critical Humanities

Abstract Cultures of memory in India are community specific. Cultural communities spread across over millennia as heterogeneous biocultural formations (*jati*s). Each of the *jati*s has brought forth distinct mnemocultural forms to mark its singularity and distinction from the others. Colonialism disrupts precisely this relation between the jati and culture by stigmatizing *jati* as a symbol of oppression. Denigration of *jati* results in the undermining of *jati*-culture. While analysing the colonial stigmatization of biocultural formations of India, this chapter affirms the need to reexamine *jati*-culture relation mainly to reconfigure the teaching and research in the humanities in India.

Keywords Caste/jati · Kula purana · Biocultural formations · Political correctness · Postcolonial destitution

> *Jatyanantyam tu sampraptam tadvaktum naiva shakyate…*
> *Vidya hyanantashcha kalah samkhyatum naiva shakyate…*
> [Through corruption or miscegenation] *jatis* come forth endlessly (infinitely) and no one can recount or name them. Recitations and gestural and handiworks are infinite and counting or reckoning them is impossible.
> (*Shukranitisara* 2002, pp. 284, 286)

> Accessing those long-delegitimized epistemes requires a different engagement. The pedagogic effort that may bring about lasting epistemic change in the oppressed is never accurate, and must be forever renewed. Otherwise there does not seem much point in considering the humanities worth teaching.
> —Spivak (2008, p. 20)

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10.1 Destinies of the Critical

In the encounter between Europe and its so-called other (at least from the 18th century), the conception of the latter contributed to the consolidation of the former; the other strengthened the self. But in the process the other was also re-coded as a deviant variation of European culture. Indology and ethnographic folkloristics are the quintessential European discourses drawing in the other into the lines of the same. How come there's no Deutschologie and Francologie, asks Mohanty (2001a, p. 57). In a similar vein one could ask: How come mnemocultures have no place in canonized literary studies? Why doesn't philosophy engage with "orality"—with non-literacy, or with acoustic musical thought? How come song cultures have no place in Marxist discursive scheme?[1] How would postcoloniality relate itself or respond to articulations from the margins of literacy? Can the twin mechanisms of disciplinarity and institution engage with mnemocultures without their professional protocols and epistemological certitudes?

The fact that decolonization unleashed a renewed wave of neocolonial knowledges in the form of area studies is a testimony to the prevalence of epistemic violence. Today mnemocultures on the margins are surrounded by neocolonial area knowledges. The twin mechanisms of discipline and institution have played a major role in the spread of the area studies paradigm. They perpetuate postcolonial destitution.

It is in the contexts of these heavy binds of area knowledges and their protocols, but beyond their alluring pull that one must refigure the futures of mnemocultural pasts. This is what, I take, the philosopher Mohanty was suggesting when, after acknowledging their worth, he commented on the limiting aspects of that expedient discourse called subaltern studies. The subalternist discourse has not considered, observes Mohanty, "to what extent the subjectivity of the peasantry is penetrated by the tradition to which he belongs even when he rebels against oppression. The subaltern group does not want to bring back the theme of tradition" (2001a, p. 64). The subalternist work helps little in opening new passageways to rearticulating our pasts beyond colonial consciousness.

"Bring back the theme of tradition" is a problematic and loaded locution. It seems to presuppose consensus concerning the unity and identity of "the tradition". But his critical historical knowledge of Indian tradition (his challenge to the

[1] Mnemocultures are a part of prehistory in Marx's grand narrative of modes of production. Early in the *Grundrisse* Marx writes: "Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?" Yet, Marx was vigilant to the in-adequacy and irreducibility of the relation between the "material foundation" and the arts: "In the case of the arts, it is well known that certain periods of their flowering are out of all proportion to the general development of society, hence also to the material foundation, the skeletal structure as it were, of its organization." And a little later: "But the difficulty lies not in understanding that the Greek arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain respect they account as a norm and as an unattainable model" (Marx 1973, pp. 110–111).

Vedantization of Indian thought), and his explicit questioning of dogmatic and virulent Hindu unificatory ventures, should dispel doubts concerning Mohanty's work. If the subalternist discourse foreclosed "tradition", neither the Chicago cosmopolitanism[2] (Sheldon Pollock's work) nor Dipesh Chakrabarty's (1992) expedition of provincializing Europe is likely to help us address Mohanty's question.

In addressing this question, however, our own proposal to explore mnemocultures, in order to reconfigure the futures of the past, might be misconstrued. Therefore it is important to point out that the mnemocultural practices implied here are no privileged instances of some putative auratic presence. They are the singular elements of most commonly repeated significatory practices. In other words, cultural formations can be explored as constituted by differentially structured significatory practices—rather than hierarchically organized essential unities. The most commonly understood concept of difference is that of a divided structure of oppositions wherein the opposed elements are in a sequence of the original and the subsequent. Ethnological and historiological discourses operate with this commonsensical conception of difference in dealing with significatory practices of song and writing systems. From Aristotle to Albert Lord, the relation between these systems is said to be conceived in the sedimented commonsensical form of difference. Slotted into a hierarchy of opposites, significatory practices of speech and writing systems entail violent, epistemological and social consequences.[3]

A non-oppositional epistemological conception and practice of (irreducible) difference must be explored to unravel the most violent hierarchies we are exposed to. In such an exploration the relation between speech and writing systems would

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[2] Sheldon Pollock in his grand historical narrative, "Cosmopolitanism and Vernacular Public Culture", sets out to outline the relation between polity and culture after the first millennium in South Asia and the West. Pollock's argument is that the "vernacular" cultures developed mainly antagonistically with the cosmopolitan cultures of Latin (in the case of the West) and Sanskrit (in India). This antagonism was the result of a sort of agentive consciousness, a sort of subalternist assertion for Pollock: "Vernacular literary cultures were initiated by the conscious decisions of writers to reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe by renouncing the larger world for the smaller place, and they did so in full awareness of the significance of their decision." Here once again one notices the Latin model functioning as the cultural referent. Anyone familiar with *bhasha* literary histories of India (from the second millennium), doubts the plausibility of this thesis. The *bhasha* literatures and languages do not indicate any desire to renounce the classical or the Sanskritic. Many of the writers and thinkers were celebrated, as we have shown elaborately in earlier chapters in the Telugu context, *bahu bhasha kovidulu* (masters of many languages). More than antagonism with Sanskrit, one could find a sort of animated reception and emulation of Sanskrit *vangmaya* which augmented and strengthened the emerging (and consolidating) *bhasha* literatures. Pollock's grand scheme disavows the phenomena of receptions of the Sanskritic among the "vernaculars" (2001, p. 592).

[3] Analysing the asymmetric relation developed between speech and writing Michel de Certeau wrote (1988, p. 211): "The distinction between speech and writing is useful for classifying the problems that the rising sun of the New World and the twilight of medieval Christianity would reveal to an intelligentsia." Further: "Seen in the light of modern society, the distinction between them acquires a social and epistemological relevance that it did not yet possess".

no longer be that of an ontological opposition but that of shifting and iterable complicity of variation and distance. A response sensitive to singularities and specificities, but strategically non-oppositional would be of great help in rethinking the "tradition" that Mohanty found disavowed in the subaltern studies. All along this work we have tracked such a non-oppositional but differential response—indeed, a responsive reception of/to the available. The generative impulse that disseminated genres and genos across millennia put to work precisely such response in dispersing mnemocultures and biocultural formations in the subcontinent and beyond. The thematics of repetition, freedom, memory, desire, the body and alterity in Indic mnemocultures, as elaborated so far in this work, suggest the possibility of a different articulation of the body and symbol than the ones unravelled in/as the monologotheism of the West by Derrida.

Mnemocultres proliferate as heterogeneous modes of being. In their singular enactment of embodied relation to the aporetic of generativity, this work advances the stance that mnemocutures unleash *genos* and genres, *jati*s and their cultural forms—thus reiterate the generative force even when they sense the need to suspend the impulse. Each generative effect comes forth as a differential *genos* and genre—that is, as articulations of the body and symbol. The modes of such articulations of gesture and speech are embodied and enacted. They are reflective performances. These performatives reiterate in every instance the irreducible necessity—or the worthwhile act—to live on and put the body complex to work. As long as generative effects come forth, the only way to deal with them, as one learns to suspend and distantiate from them, is to live them performatively, tend/attend to them. This is precisely what the *jati*s and cultures of Indian traditions have nurtured over millennia. Colonial epistemic violence has ruptured this very relation between *jati* and culture by denigrating the former and recoding the latter.

European attitudes towards "caste" are *European* attitudes; there is nothing in European culture that prepared it to respond with responsibility towards the lively rhythms of caste. Finding it immeasurably slippery, dizzyingly simulacral, paganly monstrous, differentially replicative, apparently normed but resiliently norm-less (hence immoral), deeply natural but obviously cultural, caste emerged from European mentality as a wholly stigmatized object. This chapter accentuates the affirmative voices of the plurivocal biocultures of India as an unavoidable necessity if we wish to move beyond the postcolonial abyss. For we have abdicated the responsibility to rethink this enigmatic phenomena outside colonial consciousness.

10.2 Castes of Thought

"Caste" vindicates the limits of European sensitivity and responsibility to what does not conform to European cultural referent. Caste exposes European failure to respond to the most unique opportunity it has had to overcome Eurocentrism—a colossal epistemic failure to respond to something radically different. Unfamiliar

with and insensitive to the profoundly heteronormative currents of life/living, European irresponsibility stigmatizes what it dubbed as caste on the eve of colonialism. The colonial epoch—the colossal pedagogical effort to change minds—consolidated its stigmatizing attitude by turning caste into an object of discourse, a "textual" and empirical construct—and institutionalized the *system*/theory. Awed and cowered by the colonial pedagogical power, silenced by the representationalist procedures and evidentiary practices, the colonial subject was more and more impelled to seek voice through these very channels. Colonial pedagogy nurtured desire for such grooming—it accrued material benefits along with lucrative mind change for the in-formed native. What escaped this colonial pedagogical self-fashioning remained condemned to the fate of silence. In the course of time, the university—the template of the principle of reason—bred and replicated the "best" and worst voices groomed in the new discursive pedagogical modes. The clamour of these voices more and more immunizes them from the silences. This auto-immunization is the continued abdication of responsibility to the silenced.

The social sciences service the machine of discourse on caste—and it is in the nature of the machine to replicate what it has been designed or programmed to do. In accordance with their divided "specialities" the social sciences divisively aspectualize the "caste problem". Irrespective of the disciplinary calculus, the dominant dogma concerning the stigmatized figure of caste remains common across disciplines. Given the substance of their object of inquiry—European canon—literary studies and philosophy transcend themselves from "caste debates." It is doubtful whether the discipline of philosophy—a classically valorized profession of inquiry—in the Indian context ever ventured to reflect on the "caste question" unencumbered by the Indological verities.[4] In other words, one wonders whether philosophical inquiry or literary imagination ever risked inquiring into the potential for any *thinking in general* in the stigmatized and denigrated phenomena called "caste". One wonders why such an incredibly non-normative phenomenon like *jati* (which is, incidentally, just one among many other cultural rhythms) did not encourage the possibility of critical unravelling of the violence of the mono-logo-theo-normative order of the West. The continued absence of such inquiries is eloquent testimony to our postcolonial destitution—a sign of the programmed way in which thinking and imagination gets regulated.

The colonial transplant effect is so productive that irrespective of the discipline and political parochialism, in the (post)colonial "public use of reason" there is

[4] Curiously, the figure (without a proper referent) of caste appears to drown educated intelligentsia in the slough of unexamined guilt. Even philosophical training and cultivation does not seem to help philosophers to free themselves from the pit of guilt. Reacting to the phenomenon of "caste system", Akeel Bilgrami (2006, p. 216) has this to say: "When I think sometimes about caste in India—without a doubt the most resilient form of exclusionary social inegalitarianism in the history of the world—it's hard to avoid the conclusion that even the most alarming aspects of religious intolerance is preferable to it". But this absence of "religious intolerance" and the disasters its presence continues to cause in Abrahamic cultures does not impel Bilgrami to grapple more seriously with this stigmatized figure of *jati*.

near total consensus about the stigmatized nature of caste. It is an *a priori* evil and emblem of totalized oppression and one can only in "public" repeatedly give vent to this abjection. One cannot *not* think in "public" of condemning it, recommending its eradication, repeating catechistically its supposed inhuman oppression, and setting out to annihilate it wholly. One can only wish, in public, of purging oneself of this abominable virus from the host tissues and fluids of Indian cultural formations. Caste is the nightmare that haunts colonial consciousness and perpetuates its unexamined guilt.

One cannot think of any other phenomenon in the (post)colonial epoch which evokes such a patterned, unified response across the intellectual terrain of the West and the subcontinent in the "modern" period. The ringing or reigning irony of this intellectual culture is that it proclaims its loyalty to unconditional exercise of reason in public and open-ended search for truth. But such a "noble heritage" has not encouraged any original inquiry—an exercise in public use of reason—into this enigmatic, a-systemic phenomena dubbed as (Portuguese) "casta", beyond the patterned condemnation of it as a stigmatic object.

It is difficult to think of events and contexts of Western cultural history—however radically evil they might have been—that remained foreclosed for inquiry in rigorous and innovative ways. European modular goodness seems to implant precisely such a mechanism of foreclosure in the colonial body of culture so that the latter continues to replicate itself in the programmed ways. If caste is little more than a pure embodiment of oppression as the postcolonial cognoscenti across the disciplines and media cockily declare ("centuries of oppression") and if it can be talked about only as a relentless oppressive mechanism—are we prepared to extend the same logic of foreclosure to all oppressive organs? Then how legitimate is it to continue to speak and think in the English (or French) language which championed slavery and colonialism and continues to inflict oppression on a planetary scale today? How legitimate is it to continue to celebrate the European intellectual heritage (of noble thinkers and writers), which is a part of a culture that decimated populations for centuries, engineered and legitimized radical oppression on the others? The point that appears to be crudely belaboured here is that even such oppressive lineages of the West continue to have chance of being inquired into in different ways (hence their archival memory). No such fate is granted to cultures that faced colonialism—cultures whose rhythms and ways of being get stigmatized. They are obliged to endure a discredited exit even when they continue to survive.[5]

[5] Critiquing colonial "disqualification of an entire cognitive universe" of India, Sudipta Kaviraj contends that Europe *did not* adopt the procedures of public use of reason to disqualify Indian traditions: the "advancing systems of modern knowledge rejected traditional conceptions in a large range of cognitive fields without subjecting them to this procedure,"—a procedure which Europe meticulously adopted in its engagement with its premodernity (2005, p. 133). Undoubtedly this observation is of great critical significance. Yet, one looks in vain in Kaviraj's account for any attempt to engage with the stigmatized figure of *jati* which surely is a part of the Indian "cognitive universe"?

For sure, the thematic of caste is very much in circulation in the public realm in our postcolonial times—its stridency is rather unparalleled in any other epoch. Every conceivable public constituency—formal, party-political, academic, media, judicial, and "democratic"—deems it mandatory to evoke the "caste problem" today. The din of caste discourse drowns just everything else in the public use of reason across these domains. Yet, the staggering fact remains that the transplant effect of abjection remains with such certainty in public use of reason: caste is a relentless totalizing signifier of oppression: period! Public use of reason is yet to free itself from the transplant effect of guilt or shame and reflect on this much maligned and ill-thought praxial trope called "caste".

All the sanctioned assertions about "caste" (through calculated reasoning of number and classification) in ill-thought unities and rampantly expedient discourses ("exclusion and inclusion studies") can only reinforce the transplant effect. They have done nothing to redress the postcolonial destitution of our times. Instead of risking a plunge into the abyss that the transplant effect has generated between the host culture and the programme of self-fashioning it sanctioned, these assertions most ironically reconfirm "caste"—through the gesture politics of championing the "oppressed". Sanctioning or reducing the reflection on caste only to the overdetermined phenomenon of oppression, these accounts not just fall prey to the logic of denegation (disavowing what they practise) but continue to foreclose the risk of inquiry.

Any inquiry into caste that does not conform to sanctioned programming and which invites attention to the colonial effect of self-fashioning will be denounced as "casteist" (whatever that may mean)—that is, perpetuator of oppression. The crippling irony of this situation, which hardly receives attention, is that both the alleged oppressor and the veritable liberator are compelled by default as it were to attend to the enigma of caste. Neither the quota bankers nor the quota busters are in a position to measure the cultural complexity of caste. Yet, caste, like other rhythms, will continue to texture Indian living but will remain more and more unrethought or will circulate only in sanctioned ways. Political correctness is another name for sanctioned ignorance.

10.3 Un-Archival Impulses

Every cultural form and every cultural composition in India, every verbal and visual genre that was invented and circulated over millennia was generated on the singular axiom: know yourself by knowing your *kula* (*varna*, *jati*). (The "knowing" here refers to action knowledge—learning to go about in the world through received modes.) That is, one's living and awareness are deeply related to one's location in a *kula*. In other words, singularity of one's existence and one's sense of it are contingent upon one's sense of the singularity of one's own community and its existence. "Indian" cultural formations are woven with such fractal multiplicity

of singularities. Discrete in their living and reflective compositions of speech and gesture, each of these singular communities is also intricately related to the other.

A radical impulse of difference and distance structures these multiple singularities; it enables the affirmation of the discrete (singular) and the related ("continuous") existence and expression of these formations to move on. The most significant effect of this radical impulse is that it enabled each of these singular communities to affirm their living on in irreducibly distinct idioms of their voices and gestures, of compositions and artefacts. The heterogeneity of these idioms is immeasurable and inexhaustible (Manu outlines the generative template of such proliferation; Kautilya and Vatsayana enumerate—differently—the distinct idioms of such existents and their creations in the forms of *chatushashtikala*s—the "sixty-four arts").

The cultural genealogies of these multiple singular communities can be traced back to the beginning of the first millennium (and even further into antiquity)—and their idiomatic narrative, visual and performing compositions proliferate in situation-sensitive modes. As can be noticed, these radically norm-defying proliferative singularities of culture and community get reduced to a stigmatized object called caste in the colonial epoch. The depth of our destitute times can be felt when one senses the demarcating distinctions of these idiomatic communities are foreclosed for examination at an epistemic level.

In a word, in the "Indian" context (although not limited to it)—one cannot think of culture without the sense of the multiple singularities of community and their idiomatic articulations and inheritances. Neither these communities—which are themselves intricately differentiated internally and in relation to their counterparts—nor their articulations can be subsumed under a normative discursive order. No wonder European human sciences—which spawned a catachrestic discourse called Indology whose implicit cultural referent and implied reader are quintessentially Euro-centred—neither could respond to the call of these simulacrally and deliriously varied singularities—nor could they vouch any responsibility for them. With cultivated disregard for the unknown other, they violently imposed normative schemas on these formations. They fabricated a system of caste and erected a religion called Hinduism—where the cultural referent for both the "system" as well as "religion" remained Christianity.

As a part of their protocols of representation these human sciences tried to circumscribe the proliferating multiplicity of *jati*s by manuscripting, codifying and recording them; centralizing their mnemocultural forms and formations by prosthetic means through primitive accumulation modes for archives, normed standards for them in forging "critical editions". It is impossible to think of the spread of the human sciences without the replication of the normative order and without the powerful reiterative techniques of scribal and print mechanisms globally.

Jati forms of India confound even that brilliant Chinese encyclopaedia that Borges conceived—at least in one respect (see Foucault 1970, p. xv). If the latter is an endless conglomeration of imaginary objects—contained in a two-dimensional, flattened visual space (Borges wrote about it), the former is an open-ended and exasperating rhizomic entity, morphing itself into countless shapes in the everyday cultural soils. Codifying them, as the British administrators tried to do, is

laughable. The categorizing and classificatory effort is indeed exposed to irony, as it seems more like an attempt to control and limit the most uncanny phenomena (even the much maligned Manu never attempted to count and codify them empirically). For, the uncanny proliferation of *jati* manifestations, their "infinite play from simulacrum to simulacrum, from double to double" (Derrida quoted in Johnson 1978, p. 471), elude categorizations.

Such a phenomenon, in its uses of languages and available forms, exemplifies the irresistible movement of differential structures. Thus, if *jati* forms are variegated, their articulations in speech and gesture are even more astounding. They embody the singular signatures of Indic cultural specificity. Cultural practices, in Indian context, not only acknowledged differences from one another but in fact contained and enacted specificities of a *jati* or community set-up (here it must be pointed out that, strictly speaking, *jati* is not equivalent to community). *Jati*s are, as pointed out in one of the earlier chapters, are internally self-differentiating and are forever open-ended. That is why it is difficult to find an easy and definitive referent to any *jati*. Hence their a-systemic dispersal. The question of what is particular to a group could be addressed not so much in terms of an inherent essence of the community or group as such but more in relation (not always harmonious) to its counterparts.

Such indeterminate but interanimating formations of cultural singularities displace and undermine normative binaries and oppositions—such as folk and elite. The simple fact that the extraordinary spread of the Sanskrit language from the late first millennium till today makes none of the major Indian languages declare any kind of discontinuity with it either reflectively or linguistically. It is doubtful whether there are any reflective traditions in the Indian context (excepting perhaps some of the regions of north-east India, and some other "tribal" communities) that are untouched either directly or indirectly by the Sanskrit traditions. The "after life" (to use Benjamin's phrase) of Sanskrit is replenished in the *bhasha*s through a detour even as Sanskrit flourished in its own idiom. In other words, if the territorial referents (north/south) and ontological unities (folk/elite) can only have a deeply problematic relation to the mnemocultural formations, the ideological thematic poses even deeper epistemic problem in the context of Indic reflective formations. Cultural weaves and waves exceed the political-territorial enclosures of colonial formations.

Mnemocultural practices demand a rigorous and fundamental rethinking. The paths we have pursued so far in this work focus on two domains of inquiry. For the purposes of economy we called the entire mnemocultural work as composed of the work of hand and work of face, or as constituted by the domains of gesture and speech.[6] As we elaborated in various chapters, Sanskrit reflective and creative traditions in their preferred modes of symbolization and in their cultivated

[6] Drawing on the work of the philosopher-paleontologist, Andre Leroi-Gourhan, Jacques Derrida (1976, pp. 85–87) demonstrates the deeper implications of the subordination of the hand to face, the graphical to the phonetic, and writing to speech. The general term used both by Leroi-Gourhan and Derrida in this context is "linearization". The historical roots of this linearization process are said to have penetrated into the depths of some four millennia. See Leroi-Gourhan (1993), esp. the chapter "Language Symbols" (pp. 187–216).

indifference to lithic technics in general concentrated on the body (or body complex); precisely such profound attention to the body as the medium and effect of life and symbolization renders these reflective and creative practices radically mnemopraxial: they come forth and move on as embodied and enacted modes of living.

Sanskrit traditions, however, have no cultural patents over mnemocultures; the latter are not any unique productions of Sanskrit traditions. Wherever the immemorial communication media—such as speech/song and gesture/dance come forth, where the irreducible substrate remains the most primordial biological materiality, that is the body, mnemocultural impulse can be the driving force of such articulations.

Mnemocultures put to work their biocultural existence as life and symbolization of existence. Thus, cultural practices of divergent *jati*s in the Indian context such as Baindla, Chindu, Kurma, Savara, Kondh, Gond, Gadaba, Langa, Kalbelia, Lotha, Lucei, Meeitei, Rengma, Khasi, Banjara, and Dakkali (mostly from the so-called scheduled castes and tribes, largely outside the enclosures of alphabetic literacy) combine the two modes of gesture and speech in complex ways and live on mnemoculturally. Gestures of various kinds—gestures already marked by traditions of signification, already received—are laced with heterogeneous linguistic registers (from highly stylized epic narrative form to totally colloquial idiom, from song to meter-bound stanza, from aphorisms to wisdom tales, from shrieks to mourning and from visceral levity to pious proclamations, etc.). Myth and legend, tales of gods, ancestors and heroic narratives are brought forth through totally non-sequential (interrupted) narratorial and performative modes. These *jati*s proliferate as their genres of symbolization disperse and disseminate. In this radical spectacle of forms it is impossible to privilege either the work of hand or face univocally. Though distinct and differentiable in their appearance, these manifestations of hand (body) and face (vocal, sonorous, accented language) cannot be easily hierarchized in these biocultural formations. Memory bursts forth in differentiated symbolic verbal and visual forms.[7]

10.4 *Jati*s and Genres

Countless number of cultural genealogies (*kula*s) from immemorial times sustained their distinctions through idiomatic singularities of their language, genre, gesture and artefact. This is indeed the substance and method of Indic cultural formations. Every intricately and internally differentiated community (*kula/jati*) sustains a "parasite" community which in turn forges and nurtures the very singularity of the community's cultural genealogy and distinction. Mnemocultural genres of *kula purana*s, song cultures and performative traditions of distinct communities ("lower

[7] Viswanatha Satyanarayana (a polymath writer, cultural and literary critic in Telugu) passionately, if nostalgically, invokes these manifestations as the distinct cultural fabric of India in his classic novel *Veyipadagalu* [*Thousand Hoods*] (especially in the scene where the village troupes of a specific *jati* perform in the fort of the landlord) (Satyanarayana 1934/2006).

castes"), amply demonstrate this even today. For instance, each one of the Madiga, Mala, Gauda, Padmashali, Yadava, Rajaka communities is sustained by such internally demarcated "parasite" communities; thus Dakkali, Baindla, Chindu among the Madigas, Jetti among the Gauda, etc., come forth each as a fold or an unclosed pocket within the matrix of their respective *jati*s. *It is these parasite jati folds that circulate as the guardians of memory in each of these communities.* It must be pointed out that epistemic relation and idiomatic differentiation contributed to the proliferation of *kula purana*s, song cultures, dance forms and other verbal and visual genres across and along with multiple communities.

(Written) Literary history identifies at least three major forms of speech genres—lyric, epic and drama (Plato 1955, p. 152). Cultures of memory, as we have extensively shown in earlier chapters, disallow categorical differences among these genres; they resist the law of genres (if any); they interbreed and migrate and thus violate laws of order.[8] One such rhizomic form on the move in the context of mnemocultures of India is the *purana*. *Purana* is probably the most fitting figure to suggest the heteronymy of Indian *jati* forms. Indeed, *purana* can also be said to articulate *jati* manifestations (and, these days, caste manifestos—as in the case of the recent appropriations of the *Jambapuranamu*).

It is impossible to define the *purana* genre. Although every *purana* sings and shows its specificity, it exceeds its own self-definitions. Thus, the five *lakshana*s (features) that are said to be at work in a *purana*, can barely capture the excesses of the genre. *Purana* is made according to conventions, but no convention can circumscribe *purana*'s transgressive generative impulse. *Purana* is the most radical form that disallows any kind of categorical division between *shastra*s and *kavya*s, reasoning and imagination. (The Telugu literary tradition is indeed inaugurated by rendering *itihasa* and *purana* genres into poetic/*kavya* forms.) It transgresses and appropriates across all kinds of borders. Despite the teeming narrative elements brimming in dialogue-*samvada* frames, *purana* remains eminently non-narrative in its orientation.

For those who are formed by print literacy and are unaware of the living currents of Indic mnemocultures, there are only 18 *maha* [main] *purana*s (and some 18 *upapurana*s [subsidiary]) in the Indian "literary" corpus. Mnemocultures in Telugu alone can account for more than a hundred *purana*s today—most of them remain unrecorded and consequently uncounted among the so-called Indian cultural heritage. As these are deeply braided with *jati* forms, the rendering of *purana*s in narrative, visual and performing forms varies in accordance with the variegated biocultural formations. The "same" *purana* or *purana* figure or motif (such as Jambava among the Madigas, Madel among Rajakas) is rendered differentially across and within, outside and in the *jati* formation. They are all rendered by the "parasite" *jati*s, which are within but outside of the fold of each of the *jati*s.

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[8] Here, we must recall Plato's disparagement at violation of musical laws, the poets' experimentation with genres in *Laws*. Plato condemns (in the figure/character of Athenian Stranger in the dialogue) the violation of the aristocratic order of the differentiated genres of music by the contamination of mixed genres as leading to anarchic "theatrocracy" (Plato 1952, pp. 675–676).

When one learns to pay attention, and learns to learn from the edges, one begins to notice that the *purana* form cannot be reduced to some legitimizing narrative of the powerful, that *purana*s do not proliferate monologically. Every *jati* composes its own (visual and verbal) genres—and each one praxially renders these genres as they live on. Every composition is a responsive reception of what is available to each of the *jati*s.

The Daksha *yajna* scene of Sivapurana, for instance, lends itself to the spacing of Madel, a heroic-divine figure among the cultural of memory of Rajakas. The *Mahabharata* disseminates itself and brings forth countless compositions among biocultural receptions of it. Among all the proliferated genres of Sanskrit traditions, it is the *purana* that endeared itself to multiple *jati*s in their responsive reception of the available. Like the *Mahabharata* the *purana*s conserve and transgress the imports of the Vedic mnemocultures and enhance the life of biocultural formations. As shown in the context of "translational" practice earlier, every *jati* received and responded to what touched it. In all this, the Sanskrit reflective and acoustic traditions, their allusive narratemes, and above all their pervasive *sharira-para* body complex, deeply mark and touch these biocultural responses. The *Gaudapurana* of the toddy-tapper *jati* declares: *Cheptunnadi kula puranam. Cheppabadedemo atmajnanam* (what is being rendered is a *kula purana* but what is being imparted is the "knowledge" of the *atma*)[9]; thus, in just one stroke the *Gaudapurana* connects itself to the Upanishadic intimations in its own *jati* idiom. Mnemocultural *purana*s, "oral epics", are the condition and effect of a dehiscence that cannot be captured in a univocal thematic.

The genre defying genre of the *purana* demands extensive attention. This work does not have the required space to develop a detailed account of the differential and variegated structure of the *purana* interfaces across biocultural formations. In order to indicate the necessity and possibility of such an undertaking, a preliminary commentary on the preeminent and quintessential composition, *Jambapuranamu*,[10] of the Madiga ("scheduled caste") communities is offered here.

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[9] The actual phrase that recurs in the *Gaudapuranam* is "*atmika dharmamu*" or "*atmika*" (*atma* or the dharma of *atma*). The phrase quoted is from the editor's introduction (Nanumasa Swami 2005, pp. 12, 39).

[10] The *Jambapuranamu* is a part of the (non-)narrative, visual and performing cultures of the so-called scheduled castes of Andhra Pradesh (especially the communities from the Telangana region). This was available until recently only in its performed versions. Although a palm-leaf manuscript is used by the performers during their rendering of the *purana*, that script was not available as a public document until recently. The palm-leaf manuscript is still in the community's preserve. However, three versions of the *purana* are available in print. One was written by a dalit ideologue, which is used in performances by a specific *jati* among the scheduled castes. The other one, a transcript of a performance, is a longer version of the *purana*. Of the latter versions, that of the Dakkalis was published only a few years ago. I am using all these versions but focusing mainly on the Dakkali version to a large extent in this work. None of these versions is available in English. Hence all translations from the Telugu are mine (see *Dakkali Jambapuranamu* 2011; *Kolanupaka Nulakachandaihala Adi Jambavamahapuranamu* 2008; *Jambapuranamu: Chindu Bagotam* 1997).

An iconic and emblematic text of the internally demarcated communities of Malas and Madigas, *Jambapuranamu* is rendered by specific groups within four internally differentiated Madiga communities. Members of Chindu, Nulaka Chandaiha, Dakkali and (minimally) Mashteedulu—recite, sing and perform the *purana*. Thematically, structurally and compositionally, the rendering of the *purana* differs in the case of each of these *jati*s and within the *jati*s. The Dakkali, for instance, structure their rendering in five parts but for the Chindus it is only one, long continuum (this observation is based on the one printed version available); Chindus and Dakkalis use elaborate mythological visuals on cloth (developed again by another community from the margins[11]), but Nulaka Chandaiahs and Mashteedulu don't. But the Nulaka Chandaihas have very long scroll manuscripts of the *purana*.

Thematically, as well, if the Chindus weave the *purana* as an extended and intense interrogation of community ontologies, from the received positions of the Brahmin and the Madiga communities—the Dakkalis enact this drama, with a different emphasis, as a contention between the Shudra-peasant-landowner and the marginalized Madigas; the Dakkalis also enact this as a profoundly mediated sacrificial ritual—now enacted by the paradoxical figure of "parasitical" community. All these *jati*s are in the fold of "parasites". They are the excluded insiders of the Madiga *jati*.

The larger work, which cannot be undertaken here, should aim at examining the variations in the rendering of the *purana* not only among the communities, but identify the specificity of rendering, hence distinction and difference, within a particular, demarcated community. Despite all seeming unities in the rendering of the *purana* in these communities, each group of a specific community (say that of Chindus of Uppal[12]) differentiates its performance and narration from another group of the same community (say that of Chindus from Aler or Vangapadu[13]). Borges' imaginary Chinese encyclopaedia comes to mind once again.

The complexity and the substance of *Jambapuranamu*, for example, demand serious attention. In terms of language used in these various compositions and renderings (Sanskrit, Telangana idiom, localized Urdu), the themes contained (incest and its taboo, genealogies, Vedic sacrificial ritual, myth, logical argumentation, dialogue and the origin myths concerning *jati* forms and technology and above all, receiving and counter-signing Vedic heritage—appropriating Vyasa, Vashista and other sages into the Madiga fold) the speech genres deployed (stanzaic verse, hymns, prayers, eulogies, dialogue and questioning, etc.)—all these elements are of central significance in any meditation on Indian cultural fabric. These cultures of memory demand intimate critical exploration.

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[11] The community that provides visual material is called the Nakashis. The Nakashis are community painters and they paint mythological assemblages on long canvases. In addition, they also prepare masks, ritual and legendary figurines used during performances by various marginalized communities. The Nakashis thus serve some eight cultural communities in the Telangana area.

[12] Located on the outskirts of Hyderabad in Telangana.

[13] Towns near Hyderabad.

Myth is said to be a spatial figure—it is said to convert temporal duration into spatial figuration. Infinitely long eons are frozen into a couple of lines of teller's recitation (*ananta yugam mugisindi; adbhuta yugam mugisindi*—Ananta Yuga has ended and Adbhuta Yuga has ended. etc.[14]). Not only in its substance that myth (or, rather *purana*) confounds time with space, but even in the reception of myth—in the discourse of myth too we will find this trick at work. Myths are essentially context-bound, claim mythologists. Myths are said to be inseparable from communities. Myths embody and found the unity of a group. Myths consolidate and project identities of groups. All the *kula purana*s (*purana*s of the *jati*), the mnemocultural *purana*s, appear to emphasize this. At least, this spatializing (of the temporal) aspect of *purana*s gains emphasis in discourses on myths.

Instead of partaking in this presumed division or investing in this classical pair of time and space, we can explore a non-classical notion indicative of a movement in the context of mnemocultures. Derrida calls this movement spacing (1982, p. 317)—and the generality of this notion moves beyond all spatio-temporal categories like period, genre, culture, nation, text, institution, in short, all forms of semiotic and non-semiotic, discursive and non-discursive unities. Spacing as the non-exclusive occurrence of the one (temporality as instant and duration) and the other (space), suggests a direction without a destination (Derrida 1982, pp. 309–330). What is spacing, then, in the context of mnemocultures? Are speech genres open to the activity of spacing?

Spacing is neither an act confined to some specific substance nor form. Spacing is a double movement of making the space and timing this making. One can track cultural tectonic movements as effects of spacing. Sheltered under "one" script in the first millennium, for instance, Telugu and Kannada, demarcate and differentiate each from the other by the middle of the second millennium—and effectively make space for a millennial literary history for each. The distance and difference between the two becomes prominent and all the powerful effects—envy, jealousy, claims of originality, purity, etc.—continue to haunt these "nationality" cultural formations.

Similar tectonic grinding can be tracked among all borders of "nationality" languages and literatures (between Tamil and Malayalam, between Assamese and Bangla, between Kashmiri and Punjabi, Meetei and Naga, Lucei and Kuki and many more). Such a rupture and marking are inescapable even within the so-called singular language (say Sanskrit or Hindi) and also in the context of its effects (i.e., various language uses). In short, every semiotic and non-semiotic unit is always exposed to the operations of spacing. In fact and in principle, the emergence of such a unit itself is contingent upon the activity of spacing. The double movement of spacing, it must be pointed out, includes making space and providing space.

[14] These lines are from the *Jambapuranamu*. Curiously, unlike the usual reckoning of four *yuga*s and four *varna*s, *Jambapuranamu* identifies and names 18 *yuga*s and 18 *varna*s.

Thus it is both a violent and an enabling activity. We discussed the force of spacing as synchronization of diachrony earlier in configuring "translation" as responsive reception of the available.

Although spacing is a general force that traverses and confounds the received unities and boundaries, the relative specificity of historically sedimented categories must be unravelled with rigour. The singularity of mnemosigning of Indian cultural specificity, biocultural formations and *purana* forms, are inconceivable without the activity of spacing being at work.

10.5 *Purana* Lives

If there is a centripetal pull, seeking unity and immanence among biocultural formations and the *purana* forms, the pull cannot be easily severed from the dehiscence of a centrifugal force, which persistently underlines the myth/community's equivocal, aporetic, exposure to its other. *Jambapuranamu*, for instance, vigorously dramatizes this force of such exposure. As pointed our earlier, the Dakkali version sets this encounter between the Kapu and Madiga communities and the Chindu version (said to be written by a Dalit ideologue), between a Brahmin and Jambavan. This is a drama of conflicting *jati* ontologies—where assertion of a specific immanence is always in the context of, even opposed to, another immanence. "You are not the real Brahmins," the real Brahmins are "the five artisan communities born from the face of Brahma (goldsmith, blacksmith, carpenter, sculptor, and brass smith)", says a version of Chindu *Jambapuranamu* (1997, p. 30). The conflict is surely about the contested hierarchies—*"Vallemo Kulonlaindru. Nuvvemo Doravainavu*" (They are turned into coolies and you have become the lord.)[15]

In responding to the conflicting hierarchies and ontologies, the Dakkali version affirms a non-oppositional differential relation which is worth exploring further in rethinking the question of *jati* and *purana*. We shall return to this.

In its desire to affirm its immanence, its totality and oneness, each *jati* betrays its own particularity—its separation from the other. The community's spacing of itself in the network of relations, at once affirms and erases its singularity. For the affirmation itself is contingent upon the recognition but disavowal of the other. It is this relation to alterity that forms all kinds of ethico-political agendas, and no

[15] As pointed out earlier, *kula purana*s these days have begun to become sources for projecting caste manifestos. This has happened especially to the Dalit (or more specifically) Madiga *Jambapuranamu*. Of late, *Jambapuranamu* presentations are orchestrated as containing bitter antagonisms and subaltern assertions exclusively against Brahmins. But the mnemotexts gathered from the performances betray this political animus. The editors, ideologues, activists muscle these compositions to make them announce *jati* antagonisms. As in the case of Vemana, in the case of these *kula purana*s as well, it is the stigmatized conception of *jati* that amplifies the reformist, subalternist shrillness.

ontological affirmations can offer a final solution to this aporetic relation. Consequently, all kinds of ontological, immanentist, assertions will remain partial and violent, and betray themselves in spacing their certainties. “The fusion of community,” wrote Jean-Luc Nancy in his interruptive reading of the relation between myth and community, “instead of propagating its movement, reconstitutes its separation: community against community. Thus the fulfilment of community is its suppression. To attain to immanence is to be cut off from another immanence: to attain immanence is to cut off immanence itself” (1991, p. 60).

If totalizing closures of community are untenable, then to conscript myth to found such totalities and closures is deeply problematic. Such conscriptions vindicate the impositions of logos on *muthos*. Myth suspends immanence in its formation. This suspension is effective on two counts. As scholars like Vernant and Stith Thompson argue, myth is notorious in its resistance to generic classification. It undermines any identity markers the moment one comes up with a set.

If generically myths are restive, thematically they are incorrigibly disloyal. Mnemocultural *purana* can space any use of language, any significatory system. Tales of gods, humans, animals and demons, themes of divinity, incest, marriage, ritual sacrifice, infanticide, boons and curses, eulogies and tirades, agriculture and magic, bondage and wandering, tools and bodies—in short, any theme can be gobbled up in the open-ended world of *purana*. For mnemocultures no myth is sanctimonious. They penetrate the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, the celebrated *Puranic* compositions—and emerge with a disseminating form that is loyal to no border patrol.

Thus, Jamba, Basava, Padma, Bhavana, Madel and scores of such *purana*s are the testimony to the radical dehiscence of myth that no logos would be able to tame. The second millennium, if not earlier, of Indian cultural map embodies this extraordinary dissemination of *purana*s. Now to hope to tether this restive, duplicitous, interminable play of the heterosemic formations without ends to a singular non-repeatable signature or identity is to repress or disavow their shifting simulacral force. What in fact the *Jambapuranamu* (the Dakkali version) enacts is a confrontation of singular individuals (Adishakti and the trinity—each at a time, Viswakarma and Agasthya, Parvati-Shiva, Shiva-Balabhadra, etc.). Here more than affirming a specific identity, what we seem to get is the commonality of beings (or, beings-together differentially). On the contrary, we find challenges to ontological assertions.

Curiously, of the five parts of the plurivocal and performative composition called the *Jambapuranamu*, none of them actually bears the protagonist’s name (Jambava).[16] Although Jambava appears in some of these sections in crucial moments—each part offers a performative thematic account of classical issues like incest and law, desire and its containment, technology and body, filicide and

[16] It must be pointed out that only in the printed version of the *Dakkali Jambapuranamu* we see all the five compositions together, whereas the itinerant *jati* that performs it gives neither order nor unity to these compositions. Each composition is performed autonomously. In other words, it is the folklorist who fixes these compositions into such a mnemotechnical retention system called the book.

sacrifice, ritual and pollution, ontology and difference, and above all woman and sharing. In other words, none of the parts is solely about lineages or totalizing identity, affirmed in the name of a founding ancestor. Lineages are referred to and affirmed only contextually and contentiously.

10.6 Guardians of Memory

Although *jati* and myth-*purana* appear to have essential relations, it is possible to figure these as untotalizable, unending and "incompleting" relations between and within their formations. Communities and myths—the classical figures of totality and origin are always interrupted as they permeate and partake of the other incessantly. Communities and *jati*s are made of "beings-in-common"; myths are the embodiments and performatives of partakings or sharings in common. Sharing or partaking is the effect of spacing. The epics and *purana*s couldn't have been what they are if the spacing and sharing forces were not at work. Biocultural formations could not have proliferated without the irrepressive energies of iterable mnemosigns. Mnemocultural margins exemplify open-ended multiplicities of beings and their commonality on the one hand, their differential sharing and recursive signatures on the other, in narrative, visual and performing genres that persistently "put into play", as Nancy wrote, "nothing other than being *in* common" (Nancy 1991, p. 65, emphasis in original).[17]

What is central to mnemocultures is the practice of sharing or partaking—the work of responsive reception. Although this practice has a more general force, its depth and spread can be experienced in our exposure to mnemocultures of margins. In Telangana alone, scores of intricately differentiated *jati* formations that have the gift of, right over, and duty to receive, replenish, and render variously the (non) narrative, visual and performing practices. To hope to track the origins of such practices is as difficult, if not impossible, as tracking the origins of speech and gestural systems.

The disciplinary institutional experts would tell us the structure and function, the integration and circulation of these communities in the context of various caste groups. It is the relationship between *jati*s and the specific cultural communities

[17] Although I have cited Nancy's work here, his account of myth in European readings is not of much help to thinking through the dehiscence of the *purana*s. For Nancy, myth is a genre of unity and totality, which is, he argues, interrupted by literature. This conception of literature, as shown in an earlier chapter, is the legacy of German Romanticism. If myth is unifying, literature is "incompleting", Nancy argues. This kind of relation between literature and myth barely tells us about the interanimating relation between the *purana* and *kavya* or the epistemic status of the former in Indian literary inquiries. The animating impulse of both these genres (and a whole lot of others) is reasoning imagination—an impulse that does not plot reason and imagination into categorical opposites. Cf., Rajasekhara's *Kavyamimamsa* (2003, Chap. 2 "Shastra Nirdesha") for an illuminating account of the non-hierarchical but differential relationship between *shastra* and *kavya* modes of composition.

filiated to each *jati* that demands a careful attention here. This relation has been hastily described in the disciplinary lore as "dependency" relation. That is, each mnemocultural community (of the guardians of memory) is said to be dependent on a specific caste group or groups for its survival and patronage. The disciplinary account views the relation as hierarchical and maintains it as such in ethnographic work; *jati* groups become primary and mnemocultural communities (the excluded inside) secondary in this sequential graph. In short, the mnemo-genos are "parasitical" on the "original" caste groups. This unilinear ethnographic coding of these terms fails to attend to their peculiar and paradoxical imports of "parasitism".

In matters of life, economy, culture and politics, it is precisely the so-called dependency and parasitism that underwrite an agonistic relation to their respective others. Consequently, the relation between the so-called host and its parasite gains a new significance; this would be an undecidable and irresolvable relationship. This peculiar bond between the *jati* (host) group and the cultural (parasite or excluded inside, a fold within the fold of *jati*) community is that the latter *alone* is the durational "source" for asserting the former's singularity and distinction. That is, every *jati* demarcates and distinguishes itself from its other, only through the extraordinary mnemic resources of the excluded inside "parasite". The desire to consolidate an immanence, a community's unity, (irrespective of whether the community is "dominant" or "subordinated"—as the subalternists described them), is deeply contingent upon the gatherings of this guardian of memory. In a word, the *jati* group's much coveted singular identity, its individuated immanence, is nurtured and enhanced by the so-called dependent parasite or the excluded other inside—indeed, the *para(iah)* of the *jati*.

The survival and extension of the *jati*'s unique existence is contingent upon the repeated replenishments of mnemocultural communities. If the only way through which a *jati* group can mark/make its distinction is by deriving its sources of sustenance from a "subordinated" community—without which the group's continuity in that distinctive form is doubtful—the fundamental question that confronts us is: *who is the actual host and who is the real parasite*? Isn't it the caste group that is dependent on the so-called (excluded) parasite for the propagation of its distinction (however precarious that might be)? Every *jati* group's imaginaries of self are dependent on these mnemocultural communities' renderings regarding their beings-in-common and being distinct. The complexity of these phenomena cannot be slotted into some reductionist oppositional hierarchical binary. However, every specific manifestation of the violent hierarchy must be engaged with, every singular exemplification of it must be studied with patience—only then one can begin to learn the possibilities of reconstellating the elements of the violent binary and hierarchy.[18]

[18] However unpalatable and politically incorrect this might be, one must indicate here that the rights discourse that Dalit assertions fall back upon often, in order to gain a seamless unity among them for a (electoral) political cause, may end up erasing the distinctions that each *jati* embodies. Consequently, such assertions silently efface these guardians of memory who for centuries have mnemoculturally enhanced the life of the *jati*—while remaining outside *in* the community. These are indeed the *critical humanities* from the folds of the biocultural formations of India.

The way the activity of translation extends and mediates the life of the so-called original (for the original itself is impossible without a certain kind of translation being at work), the *parasite plays as a carrier of life forms*. Formations of life (and identities) are unthinkable without the fundamental act of a parasitical translation or solicitation both in life as well as in culture. In the same series one can put the formal democracies' dependence on the "parasitical" subaltern vote-banks—where the latter, the growing, "non-productive" underclass is represented as the burden of the host state.

10.7 Mnemocultural Hospitality

If the host depends on the parasite, and not the other way round, as usually represented, what kind of relationship can be envisaged from this overturned hierarchy? *The "new" relationship must emerge as a space of hospitality and not an inversion of the earlier hierarchy.* This is what mnemocultures of margin perform in every iterable rendering of their acts. If community is made of beings-in-common, then the relation among singular beings is that of partaking, or participating and sharing. All these elements imply partiality or particularity. Every particularity, in its repeatability, its recurrence, suggests the impossibility of a completed totality. Sharing without an end, partaking without finality, is the imperative of incompleted or open-ended communities.

In a significant scene of the *Jambapuranamu*, after Shiva (in disguise) repeatedly fails to receive hospitality from the landowner, Jambavan insists on the ethics of sharing. Without such sharing there is neither an order nor hospitality or cordiality ("*Okari kinda okallundaru. Daya vundadu… Danam chese vallundale, dharmam chese vallundele*"[19] [One won't follow another. There won't be cordiality…. There must be those who give, who offer to others.]). If there is a single practice that moves across in time and space, vertically and horizontally, on the Indian cultural weave—a practice repeatedly affirmed throughout—it is, in its idiomatic formulation: *bhiksha(mu)*. (The *Mahabharata*, as we tried to show earlier, silently from time to time, points to the non-exemplary figures that live on with this action knowledge of living on *bhiksha* of a peculiar kind—*unchavrutti*.) Every Indian language in all its various manifestations is endowed with this

[19] *Dakkali Jambapuranamu* (2011, pp. 311, 333). One of the extraordinary aspects of *Jambapuranamu* is that it is profoundly sensitive to the *jati* differences (repeatedly these differences are identified as 18 *varna*s and 24 *kula*s); at the same time it reiterates their spacing in the self-differentiating *jati* networks. The Chindu *Jambapuranamu* in fact names and offers lists of these communities. Cf., *Jambapuranamu: Chindu Bagotam* (1997, pp. 20–25). The last section of the *Dakkali Jambapuranamu* is entirely directed towards reinforcing cordiality and hospitality to these heterogeneous modes of being in the world (2011, pp. 307–355).

idiomatic locution. Although the term can be conflated with beggary, its connotations, in terms of practiced circulation of it, are deeply connected to acts of sharing/partaking and hospitality and cordiality. Buddhism, in its own response to the received hierarchies, has given a pride of place to the practice of *bhiksha*. Every Buddhist monk is a *bhikku*—the partaker. Buddhism in a way continues a well-established practice of surviving through *yachaka* (the one who seeks alms), which every Brahmin was expected to practice at some stage of life.

If the *Jambapuranamu* thematizes the acts of sharing, all mnemocultrual communities yearn for and learn from this action knowledge. The *Jambapuranamu* thematizes these double acts of community. If the Dakkali community is hospitable to the Madigas by repeatedly affirming the latter's singularity through its resources, it also yearns for acts of sharing from this community. This double movement is inverted in the Dakkali relation with the Enelavadu—yet another *jati* pocket within the Madiga fold. Similarly another inversion forms the bond between the Enela and the Shankamooukala (another *jati*), between the latter and Burrakayala and so on and so forth till we reach the singular performer-narrator Mondivadu[20] (the latter's unexplored performative tradition is worth a deeper study). Across all these simulacral doubles, not just within the Madiga community, but all the way from the other biocultural formations and their internally divided and distanced doubles—one can track the dual act of yearning for a share, extending hospitality to the other. (The themes of partaking and remainders have profound significance in Indian cultural practices.)

If there is to be a future, mnemocultural practices seem to suggest, beyond all affirmations of immanences and identities, the infinite play of being-in-common, living with difference, the iterable bond of sharing and sheltering must be actively performed. The other within, the guest-*para* in the host-*sharira* (body) must find hospitality. If we must rethink the futures of our pasts beyond the limiting mechanisms of desire, discipline, institution and expertise, and above all some vicious national-cultural-unities, our beings in common with mnemocultural communities, must be radically rearticulated.

Such an articulation, wrote Raymond Williams in a deeply relevant context,

> … can be the long and difficult remaking of an inherited (determined) practical consciousness [… which is] in practice a struggle at the roots of the mind—not casting off an ideology, or learning phrases about it, but confronting a hegemony in the fibers of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships (1978, p. 212).

In order to creatively practice such an articulation in everyday life, we must be responsive, "not to the binary logic", as Vernant affirmed, "of yes or no but a logic different from that of the *logos*" (1990, p. 260)—in our hospitality towards the

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[20] All the nomenclatures mentioned here represent the so-called apparently unified but deeply differentiated, scheduled caste community (in Telangana).

dehiscent biocultural formations and *purana*s from the margins.[21] Perhaps Mohanty was hinting at such a response when he critiqued the subalternist disavowal of tradition, and pointed out his inclination towards Confucian ethics, which, he felt, broke down the barriers between aesthetic, ethical and religious domains (Mohanty 2001b, p. 89). Such other logic, in its non-oppositional receptions of alterity, might help us re-conceive our common critical humanities.

My contention is that, as I have been affirming throughout this work, in the postcolonial Indian context (although not limited to it)—one cannot think of culture without sensing the multiple singularities of community and their idiomatic articulations and inheritances, that is, the relationship between *jati* and culture. Neither these communities—which are themselves significantly differentiated internally and in relation to their counterparts—nor their articulations can be subsumed under a normative discursive order (which "culturalists" tend to do as some phantasmatic "Hindu Culture").

In this work we tried to make visible the intricate and extraordinarily developed articulations from the heterogeneous cultural communities; and tried to make this work of the face and body available across and beyond all forms of received or determined constituencies (village, town, folkloristics, ethnography and culturalist agendas); in other words, we tried to explore (with an epistemic, comparatological orientation) the generalizable aspects of these mnemopraxial compositions. In undertaking this project, our aim is to underscore the fact that the Indic cultural fabric cannot be traced without an intimate and rigorous exploration into the circulating mnemocultures of biocultural formations. Such an inquiry, topical as well as deeply concerned with the past (linking Vedic ritual culture to variedly persisting receptive responses), will help us comprehending and rethinking the profoundly and paradoxically interanimating relations of the work of culture and *jati*, the work of hand and face—in a word the articulations of the body and symbol.

It seems to me that if we begin to attend to *jati* as a non-cohering, self-differentiating, biocultural formation, it might provide an opportunity to reflect on the intractable filiations between the immemorial inheritances of the biological and cultural; *jati* might help us to explore the bonding between modes of being in the world and their symbolic/prosthetic performative textures of memories, gestures and song lines. As we (barely) know, *jati*s are the most tenacious biocultural formations that organize, internally differentiate themselves, and proliferate interminably. These are the singular and enigmatic cultural groups that sustain their distinctions through enduring hereditary forms of complex symbolic orders (recitational, narrative, visual and performing genres).What we teach, how we

[21] The theme of hospitality in this work is a receptive response to two sources: (i) the significant notions of *athitya* and *athithi* from Sanskrit reflective traditions. *A-thithi* literally refers to the one who is an untimely visitor—*a-thithi* (where *thithi* refers to a marked moment of time). *Athithya* therefore is unconditional hospitality to the untimely visitor. (ii) The extensive meditations of Derrida on this practice of hospitality are my second source. Cf. Derrida (2000).

read, what we inquire into and explore from the heterogeneous locations with immemorial tracks and traces must learn to be open to and yearn for intimations from these symbolic orders. We must learn to communicate with the memories of life and being that are embodied and performed in these cultures of *jati*s that have weathered and dispersed life itself over millennia. Why can't we affirm the freedom to think (which is the promise of the university) in opening up this biocultural domain *without alibi*?

As we showed earlier, the reflective and generative nodes of Indic mnemocultures are praxially oriented. They proliferate performatively and idiomatically. Their singular perennial concern is with the destinies of the body—the irreducible singular material entity. What does one do with what one is "gifted" (in the two senses of the term—reward and poison) with? In a performative articulation of this kind one does not proceed to offer a narrative or discursive response but enacts, and performatively brings forth, one's response. This requires one to live on with whatever one has—in terms of verbal or visual idioms, sonic and graphic forms—whatever one's body is cultivated to generate—differentially and performatively. And no one can apriori determine definitively what one has. Every existent that has a body is exposed to this performative utterance and is required to respond to it praxially. Not even gods are exempted from this a-normative or non-normative condition of responsibility and response. The radically heterogeneous proliferation of communities (*jati*s) and their idiomatic symbolic forms is made possible by this mnemocultural ethos.

How to re-activate and reconstellate such alithic heritages, the "original" inheritances of the (ambivalent) unity of the body and symbol (of gesture and speech) within the context of lithic heritages of European colonial violence remains the challenging task of the critical humanities in India. These cultures of memory and their radial forms of symbolization of gesture and speech call for interminable exploration, experimentation and paraxial innovation. It is my conviction that the space of the university can be reoriented more meaningfully and productively if we can learn to learn more about these mnemocultural reflective and performative heritages of the world that faced colonialism. This work, emerging from the receiving ends of the European institution of the humanities, is a risky attempt to respond to the violent heritage from the displaced and disenfranchised heritages of mnemocultures; these heritages, not just of the Sanskrit traditions as Mohanty initially referred to but also those "peasant" or *jati* inheritances he commented on later, must receive the individuated and collective attention today. Although ironies abound and expose all such risks to complicity, one hopes to inhabit the space of the classroom and countersign the chance of inquiry otherwise than the aims of the programme of the humanities education that colonialism institutionalized.

Otherwise, colonial consciousness will aggravate the rupture between what we do and what we are trained to say about what we do. Colonial institutions will continue to deprive us of our experience. It is against these paralysing determinations that we must learn to strive to reinvigorate our heterogeneous mnemocultural, performative and genealogical inheritances. Only through such future

anterior praxial mode can we hope to reconfigure a different future for our varied inheritances today. Such a task would perhaps enable us to affirm critical humanities from outside the ipsocratic traditions of Europe and envisage a future anterior democracy to come.

This reorientation to cultural pasts must aim at affirming the *jati* genealogies and their singular and incomparable cultural creations. In other words, one must aim at rekindling a sense of responsibility of the distanced inheritors towards their ruptured and denigrated inheritances. As *jati*s alone have access to the singularity of their generative impulse, *jati*s must be made responsible for resuscitating and transforming their cultural forms and formations.

Unavowed recipients from the unintended destinations must learn to countersign what they receive from the violent legacies that rupture the nurtured intimacies of their habitat. At the end of his lecture referred to earlier (in the Introduction), mainly addressed to Euro-American addressees, immediately after the sentence about signatories being addressees, Derrida characteristically makes the question of agency indeterminable: "We don't know them [the signatories and addressees], neither you nor I." But if that unknowable, unpredictable and "impossible" future anterior were to come from beyond the determined signatories and addressees and their programmes, Derrida warns: "I leave you to imagine the consequences" (2002, p. 237).

This impulse to inhabit inheritances differently impels us towards mnemocultures and urges us to open up to critical humanities as a response to the call of the future anterior of cultural memories beyond the Abrahamic fold. This certainly cannot undo the epistemic rupture that Mohanty points out in modern Indian intellectual life. But that is the chiasmic destiny of our existence. *What do you do with what you have?!*

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